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THE SCALP HUNTERS.

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OR,

ROMANTIC ADVENTURES IN NORTHERN MEXICO.

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BY

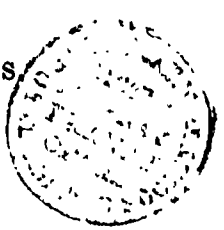
CAPTAIN MAYNE REID,

AUTHOR OF

THE "RIFLE RANGERS."

IN THREE VOLS.

VOL. II.



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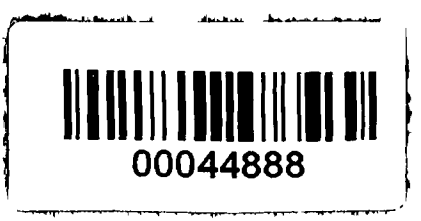

THE SCALP-HUNTERS;

OR,

ROMANTIC ADVENTURES IN NORTHERN MEXICO.

CHAPTER I.

A FEAT A LA TAIL.

I HAD fallen into a sort of reverie. My mind was occupied with the incidents I had just witnessed, when a voice—which I recognised as that of old Rube—roused me from my abstraction

"Lookee hyur, boyees! 'Taint of'n as ole Rube wastes lead, but I'll beat that Injun's shot, or 'ee may cut my ears off."

A loud laugh hailed this allusion of the trapper to his ears; which, as we have ob-

served, were already gone; and so closely had they been trimmed, that nothing remained for either knife or shears to accomplish.

"How will you do it, Rube?" cried one of the hunters; "shoot the mark off a yer own head?"

"I'll let'ee see if 'ee wait," replied Rube, stalking up to a tree, and taking from its rest a long heavy rifle, which he proceeded to wipe out with care.

The attention of all was now turned upon the manœuvres of the old trapper. Conjecture was busy as to his designs. What feat could he perform that would eclipse the one just witnessed? No one could guess.

"I'll beat it," continued he, muttering as he loaded his piece, "or 'ee may chop the little finger off ole Rube's right paw."

Another peal of laughter followed, as all perceived that this was the finger that was wanting.

"'Eees," continued he, looking at the faces that were around him, "'ee may scalp me if I don't."

This last remark elicited fresh roars of laughter; for although the cat-skin was closely drawn upon his head, all present knew that old Rube was minus his scalp!

"But how are ye goin' to do it? tell us that, old hoss!"

"'Ee see this, do'ee?" asked the trapper, holding out a small fruit of the cactus pitahaya, which he had just plucked, and cleaned of its spikelets.

"Ay, ay" cried several voices, in reply.

"'Ee do, do'ee? Wal; 'ee see 'taint half as big as the Injun's squash. 'Ee see that, do 'ee?"

"Oh! sartinly; any fool can see that."

"Wal; s'pose I plug it at sixty—plum center?"

"Wagh!" cried several, with shrugs of disappointment.

"Stick it on a pole, and any o' us can do that," said the principal speaker. "Here's Barney could knock it off wid his owld musket. Couldn't you, Barney?"

"In trath, an' I could thry," answered a very small man, leaning upon a musket, and who was dressed in a tattered uniform, that had once been sky blue. I had already noticed this individual with some curiosity, partly struck with his peculiar costume but more particularly on account of the redness of his hair, which was the *reddest* I had ever seen. It bore the marks of a severe barrack discipline—that is, it had been shaved, and was now growing out of Barney's little round head short and thick, and coarse in the grain, and of the colour of a scraped carrot. There was no possibility of mistaking Barney's nationality. In trapper phrase, any fool could have told that.

What had brought such an individual to

such a place? I asked this question, and was soon enlightened. He had been a soldier in a frontier post—one of uncle Sam's "Sky-blues." He had got tired of pork and pipe clay, accompanied with a too liberal allowance of the "hide." In a word, Barney was a deserter. What his name was, I know not, but he went under the appellation of O'Cork—Barney O'Cork.

A laugh greeted his answer to the hunter's question.

"Any o'us," continued the speaker, "could plug the persimmon that a way. But thar's a mighty heap o' diff'rence when you squints thro' hind sights at a gal like yon."

"Ye're right, Dick," said another hunter, "it makes a feller feel queery about the jeints."

"Holy vistment! An' wasn't she a raal beauty?" exclaimed the little Irishman, with an earnestness in his manner that set the trappers roaring again.

"Pish!" cried Rube, who had now finished loading, "yu'r a set o' channerin fools—that's what 'ee ar. Who palavered about a post? I've got an ole squaw as well 's the Injun. She'll hold the thing for this child—*she* will."

"Squaw! *You* a squaw?"

"Yes, hoss; I has a squaw, I wudn't swop for two o' hisn. I'll make tracks, an' fetch the old 'oman. Shet up yur heads, an' wait, will ye?"

So saying, the smoky old sinner shouldered his rifle, and walked off into the woods.

I, in common with others—late comers, who were strangers to Rube—began to think that he had an "old 'oman." There were no females to be seen about the encampment, but perhaps she was hid away in the woods. The trappers, however, who knew him, seemed to understand that the old fellow had some trick in his brain; and

that, it appeared, was no new thing for him.

We were not kept long in suspense. In a few minutes, Rube was seen returning; and by his side the "old 'oman," in the shape of a long, lank, bare-ribbed, high-boned mustang, that turned out, on close inspection, to be a mare! This, then, was Rube's squaw; and she was not at all unlike him, excepting the ears. *She* was long-eared, in common with all her race—the same as that upon which Quixote charged the windmill. The long ears caused her to look mulish—but it was only in appearance—she was a pure mustang when you examined her attentively. She seemed to have been at an earlier period of that dun yellowish colour, known as "clay-bank"—a common colour among Mexican horses—but time and scars had somewhat metamorphosed her; and grey hairs predominated all over, particularly about the head and neck. These parts were covered with

a dirty grizzle of mixed hues. She was badly wind-broken; and at stated intervals of several minutes each, her back heaved up with a jerk—from the spasmodic action of the lungs—as though she was trying to kick with her hind legs, and couldn't. She was as thin as a rail, and carried her head below the level of her shoulders; but there was something in the twinkle of her solitary eye—for she had but one—that told you she had no intention of giving up for a long time to come. She was evidently "game to the back bone."

Such was the "old 'oman" Rube had promised to fetch; and she was greeted by a loud laugh as he led her up.

"Now, lookee hyur, boyees," said he, halting in front of the crowd, "'Ee may larf, an' gabble, and grin till yur sick in the guts—yur may! but this child 's a-gwine to take the shine out o' that Injun's shot—*he* is, or bust a tryin'."

Several of the byestanders remarked that that was likely enough, and that they only waited to see in what manner it was to be done. No one who knew him doubted old Rube to be—as in fact he was—one of the very best marksmen in the mountains—fully equal perhaps to the Indian; but it was the style and circumstances which had given such *eclat* to the shot of the latter. It was not every day that a beautiful girl could be found to stand fire as the squaw had done; and it was not every hunter who would have ventured to fire at a mark so placed. The strength of the feat lay in its newness and peculiarity. The hunters had often fired at the mark held in one another's hands. There were few who would like to carry it on their head. How then was Rube to "take the shine out o' that Injun's shot?" This was the question that each was asking the other; and which was at length put directly to Rube himself.

"Shet up yur meat-traps," answered he, "an I'll show 'ee. In the fust place, then, 'ee all see that this hyur prickly ain't more 'n hef size o' the squash!"

"Yes, sartinly," answered several voices. "That wur one suckumstance in his favour. Wa'nt it?"

"It wur! it wur!

"Wal, hyur's another. The Injun, 'ee see, shot his mark off o' the head. Now, this child's a-gwine to knock hisn off o' the tail. Kud yur Injun do that? Eh, boyees?"

"No, No!"

"Do that beat him, or do it not, then?"

"It beats him!"—"It does!"—"Far better!"—"Hooray!" vociferated several voices, amidst yells of laughter. No one dissented, as the hunters, pleased with the joke, were anxious to see it carried through.

Rube did not detain them long. Leaving his rifle in the hands of his friend

Garey, he led the old mare up towards the spot, that had been occupied by the Indian girl. Reaching this, he halted.

We all expected to see him turn the animal, with her side towards us, thus leaving her body out of range. It soon became evident that this was not the old fellow's intention. It would have spoiled the look of the thing, had he done so; and that idea was no doubt running in his mind.

Choosing a place, where the ground chanced to be slightly hollowed out, he led the mustang forward, until her fore feet rested in the hollow. The tail was thus thrown above the body.

Having squared her hips to the camp, he whispered something at her head; and, going round to the hind quarters, adjusted the pear upon the highest curve of the stump; and then came walking back.

Would the mare stand? No fear of that. She had been trained to stand in one place,

for a longer period than was now required of her.

The appearance which the old mare exhibited—nothing visible but her hind legs and buttocks—for the mules had stripped her tail —had by this time wound the spectators up to the risible point; and most of them were yelling.

"Stop yur giggle-goggle, will yur," said Rube, clutching his rifle, and taking his stand. The laughter was held in, no one wishing to disturb the shot.

"Now, old Tar-guts, don't waste your fodder," muttered the trapper, addressing his gun; which the next moment was raised and levelled.

No one doubted but that Rube would hit the object at which he was aiming. It was a shot frequently made by western riflemen —that is a mark of the same size, at sixty yards. And, no doubt, Rube would have done it; but, just at the moment of his pul-

ling the trigger, the mare's back heaved up in one of its periodic jerks, and the pita-hanya fell to the ground!

But the ball had sped; and, creasing the animal's shoulder, passed through one of her ears!

The direction of the bullet was not known until afterwards; but its effect was visible at once; for the mare—stung in her tenderest part—uttered a sort of human-like scream; and, wheeling about, came leaping into camp—kicking over everything that happened to lie in her way!

The yells and loud laughing of the trappers—the odd ejaculations of the Indians—the "vayas" and "vivas" of the Mexicans—the wild oaths of old Rube himself—all formed a medley of sounds, that fell strangely upon the ear; and to give an idea of which, is beyond the art of my pen.

CHAPTER II.

THE PROGRAMME.

Shortly after, I was wandering out to the caballada to look after my horse, when the sound of a bugle fell upon my ear. It was the signal for the men to assemble, and I turned back towards the camp.

As I re-entered it, Seguin was standing near his tent, with the bugle still in his hand. The hunters were gathering around him.

They were soon all assembled, and stood in groups, waiting for the chief to speak.

"Comrades!" said Seguin, "to-morrow we break up this camp, for an expedition against the enemy. I have brought you together that you may know my plans; and lend me your advice."

A murmur of applause followed this announcement. The breaking up of a camp is always joyous news to men whose trade is war. It seemed to have a like effect upon this motley group of guerilleros.

The chief continued.

"It is not likely that you will have much fighting. Our dangers will be those of the desert; but we will endeavour to provide against them in the best manner possible.

"I have learned, from a reliable source, that our enemies are, at this very time, about starting upon a grand expedition to plunder the towns of Sonora and Chihuahua.

"It is their intention, if not met by the government troops, to extend their foray to Durango itself. Both tribes have com-

bined in this movement; and it is believed that all the warriors will proceed southward, leaving their country unprotected behind them.

"It is my intention then, as soon as I can ascertain that they have gone out, to enter their territory, and pierce to the main town of the Navajoes."

"Bravo!" "Hooray!" "Bueno!" "Tres bien!" "Good as wheat!" and numerous other exclamations hailed this declaration.

"Some of you know my object in making this expedition. Others do not. I will declare it to you all. It is, then, to——

"Get a grist of scalps—what else?" cried a rough brutal-looking fellow, interrupting the chief.

"No, Kirker!" replied Seguin, bending his eye upon the man, with an expression of anger.

"It is not that. We expect to meet only women. On his peril let no man touch a

hair upon the head of an Indian woman. I shall pay for no scalps of women or children."

"Where then will be our profits? We cannot bring them prisoners? We'll have enough to do to get back ourselves, I reckon, across them deserts."

These questions seemed to express the feelings of others of the band, who muttered their assent.

"You shall lose nothing. Whatever prisoners you take, shall be counted on the ground, and every man shall be paid according to his number, when we return. I will make that good."

"Oh! that's fair enough, Captain," cried several voices.

"Let it be understood then—no women or children. The plunder you shall have—it is yours by our laws—but no blood that can be spared. There is enough on our hands already. Do you all bind yourselves to this?"

"Yes—yes!" "Si!" "Oui—oui!" "Ya—ya!" "All!" "Todos—todos!" cried a multitude of voices, each man answering in his own language.

"Let those, who do not agree to it, speak."

A profound silence followed this proposal. All had bound themselves to the wishes of their leader.

"I am glad that you are unanimous. I will now state my purpose fully. It is but just you should know it."

"Aye let us know that," muttered Kirker, "if taint to raise har were goin'."

"We go then to seek for our friends and relatives, who for years have been captives to our savage enemy. There are many among us who have lost kindred—wives, sisters, and daughters."

A murmur of assent, uttered chiefly by men in Mexican costume, testified to the truth of this statement.

"I myself," continued Seguin, and his voice slightly trembled as he spoke, "am among that number. Years, long years ago, I was robbed of my child by the Navajoes. I have lately learned that she is still alive; and at their head town, with many other white captives. We go, then, to release and restore them to their friends and homes.

A shout of approbation broke from the crowd, mingled with exclamations of "Bravo!" "We'll fetch them back!" "Vive le Capitaine!" "Viva el gefé!"

When silence was restored, Seguin continued—

"You know our purpose. You have approved it. I will now make known to you the plan I had designed for accomplishing it, and listen to your advice."

Here the chief paused a moment; while the men remained silent and waiting.

"There are three passes," continued he at length, "by which we might enter the

Indian country from this side. There is first, the route of the Western Puerco. That would lead us direct to the Navajo towns."

"And why not take that way?" asked one of the hunters, a Mexican. I know the route well, as far as the Pecos towns."

"Because we could not pass the Pecos towns, without being seen by Navajo spies. There are always some of them there. Nay, more," continued Seguin, with a look that expressed a hidden meaning, "we would not get far up the Del Norté itself, before the Navajoes would be warned of our approach. We have enemies nearer home."

"Carrai! that is true," said a hunter, speaking in Spanish.

"Should they get word of our coming—even though the warriors had gone southward—you can see that we would have a journey for nothing."

"True, true!" shouted several voices.

"For the same reason, we cannot take the pass of Polvidera. Besides, at this season, there is but little prospect of game on either of these routes. We are not prepared for an expedition with our present supply. We must pass through a game country, before we can enter on the desert."

"That is true, Captain; but there is as little game to be met, if we go by the old mine. What other road then can we take?"

"There is still another route better than all, I think. We will strike southward, and then west across the Llanos, to the Old mission. From there we can go north into the Apaché country."

"Yes—yes—that is the best way, Captain."

"We will have a longer journey, but with advantages. We will find the wild cattle or the buffaloes upon the Llanos. Moreover, we will make sure of our time, as we can *caché* in the Piñon hills that over-

look the Apaché war trail, and see our enemies pass out. When they have gone south, we can cross the Gila, and keep up the Azul or Prieto. Having accomplished the object of our expedition, we may then return homeward by the nearest route."

"Bravo!" "Viva!" "That's jest right, Captain!" "That's clarly our best plan!" were a few, among the many forms, by which the hunters testified their approval of the programme. There was no dissenting voice. The word "Prieto," struck like music upon their ears. That was a magic word—the name of the far-famed river, on whose waters the trapper legends had long placed the El Dorado—the mountain of gold! Many a story of this celebrated region had been told at the hunter's camp-fire, all agreeing in one point, that there the gold lay in "lumps" upon the surface of the ground, and filled the rivers with its shining grains! Often had the trappers talked of an expedition to this

unknown land; and small parties were said to have actually entered it; but none of these adventurers had ever been known to return!

The hunters saw, now for the first time, the prospect of penetrating this region with safety; and their minds were filled with fancies wild and romantic. Not a few of them had joined Seguin's band, in hopes that some day this very expedition might be undertaken, and the "gold mountain" reached. What, then, were their feelings, when Seguin declared his purpose of travelling by the Prieto! At the mention of it, a buzz of peculiar meaning ran through the crowd; and the men turned to each other with looks of satisfaction.

"To-morrow, then, we will march," added the chief. "Go now, and make your preparations—we start by day-break."

As Seguin ceased speaking, the hunters departed, each to look after his "traps and possibles"—a duty soon performed—as

these rude rangers were but little encumbered with camp equipage.

I sat down upon a log, watching for some time the movements of my wild companions; and listening to their rude and Babel-like converse.

At length arrived sunset, or night, for they are almost synonymous in these latitudes. Fresh logs were flung upon the fires, till they blazed up. The men sat around them, cooking, eating, smoking, talking loudly, and laughing at stories that illustrated their own wild habits. The red light fell upon fierce dark faces—now fiercer and more swarthy under the glare of the burning cottonwood.

By its light the savage expression was strengthened on every countenance. Beards looked darker; and teeth gleamed whiter through them. Eyes appeared more sunken; and their glances more brilliant and fiend-like. Picturesque costumes met the eye—turbans, Spanish hats, plumes, and

mottled garments—escopettes and rifles, leaning against the trees—saddles, high peaked, resting upon logs and stumps—bridles hanging from the branches overhead —strings of jerked meat, drooping in festoons in front of the tents, and haunches of venison still smoking and dripping their half coagulated drops!

The vermillion smeared on the foreheads of the Indian warriors, gleamed in the night light, as though it were blood. It was a picture, at once savage and warlike; warlike, but with an aspect of ferocity, at which the sensitive heart drew back. It was a picture such as may be seen only in a bivouack of guerilleros—of brigands—of *man-hunters!*

CHAPTER III.

EL SOL AND LA LUNA

"COME," said Seguin, touching me on the arm, "our supper is ready: I see the Doctor beckoning us."

I was not slow to answer the call—for the cool air of the evening had sharpened my appetite.

We approached the tent, in front of which was a fire. Over this, the Doctor, assisted by Godé and a Pueblo peon, was just giving the finishing touch to a savoury supper. Part of it had already been carried inside the tent. We followed it, and took our seats upon saddles, blankets, and packs.

"Why, Doctor," said Seguin, "you have proved yourself a perfect *maitre de cuisine*, to-night. This is a supper for a Lucullus."

"Ach! mein Captain: ich have goot help —mein herr Godé assist me most wonderfol."

"Well, Mr. Haller and I will do full justice to your dishes. Let us to them at once!"

"Oui, oui! bien, Monsieur Capitaine," said Godé, hurrying in with a multitude of viands. The *Canadienne* was always in his element when there was plenty to cook and eat.

We were soon engaged on fresh steaks (of wild cows), roasted ribs of venison, dried buffalo tongues, tortillas, and coffee. The coffee and tortillas were the labours of the Pueblo, in the preparation of which viands he was Godé's master.

But Godé had a choice dish *un petite morceau*—in reserve—which he brought forth with a triumphant flourish.

"Voici, Messieurs," cried he! setting it before us.

"What is it Godé?"

"Un fricassee, Monsieur."

"Of what?"

"Les frog—what de Yankee call boo-frog!"

"A fricassee of bull frogs!"

"Oui, oui, mon maitre. Voulez vous?"

"No—thank you."

"I will trouble you, Monsieur Godé," said Seguin.

"Ich, ich mein Godé—frocks ver goot;" and the Doctor held out his platter to be helped.

Godé in wandering by the river had encountered a pond of giant frogs, and the fricassee was the result. I had not then overcome my national antipathy to the victims of St. Patrick's curse; and, to the voyageur's astonishment, I refused to share the dainty.

During our supper-conversation, I gathered some facts of the Doctor's history, which, with what I had already learned, rendered the old man an object of extreme interest to me.

Up to this time, I had wondered what such a character could be doing in such company as that of the Scalp-hunters. I now learnt a few details that explained all.

His name was Reichter—Fredrich Reichter. He was a Strasburgher, and in the city of bells, had been a medical practitioner of some repute. The love of science—but particularly of his favourite branch, botany—had lured him away from his Rhenish home. He had wandered to the United States,—thence to the Far West, to classify the flora of that remote region. He had spent several years in the great valley of the Mississippi; and, falling in with one of the St. Louis caravans, had crossed the prairies to the Oasis of New Mexico. In his scientific wan-

derings along the Del Norté, he had met with the Scalp-hunters; and—attracted by the opportunity thus afforded him of penetrating into regions hitherto unexplored by the devotees of science—he had offered to accompany the band. This offer was gladly accepted, on account of his services as their doctor; and for two years, he had been with them, sharing their hardships and dangers!

Many a scene of peril had he passed through,—many a privation had he undergone, prompted by a love of his favourite study, and, perhaps too, by the dreams of future triumph,—when he would one day spread his strange flora before the *savans* of Europe! Poor Reichter! Poor Fredrich Reichter! yours was the dream of a dream —it never became a reality!

Our supper was at length finished, and washed down with a bottle of Paso wine. There was plenty of this, as well as Taos whiskey in the encampment; and the roars

of laughter, that reached us from without, proved that the hunters were imbibing freely of the latter.

The Doctor drew out his great meerschaum —Godé filled a red claystone; while Seguin and I lit our husk cigarrettes.

"But, tell me," said I, addressing Seguin, "who is the Indian?—he who performed the wild feat of shooting the——."

"Ah! El Sol—he is a Coco."

"A Coco!"

"Yes—of the Maricopa tribe."

"But that makes me no wiser than before. I knew that much already."

"You knew it? Who told you?"

"I heard old Rube mention the fact to his comrade Garey."

"Aye, true; he should know him," Seguin remained silent.

"Well?" continued I, wishing to learn more. "Who are the Maricopas? I have never heard of them?"

"It is a tribe but little known—a nation of singular men. They are foes of the Apaché and Navajo; their country lies down the Gila. They came originally from the Pacific—from the shores of the Californian sea."

"But this man is educated, or seems so. He speaks English and French, as well as you or I. He appears to be talented, intelligent, polite—in short, a gentleman!"

"He is all you have said."

"I cannot understand this."

"I will explain to you, my friend. That man was educated at one of the most celebrated universities in Europe. He has travelled farther, and through more countries than, perhaps, either of us."

"But how did he accomplish all this? An Indian!"

"By the aid of that which has often enabled very little men (though El Sol is not one of those) to achieve very great deeds;

or, at least, to get the credit of having done so. By gold."

"Gold! and where got he the gold? I have been told that there is very little of it in the hands of Indians. The white men have robbed them of all they once had?"

"That is in general a truth; and true of the Maricopas. There was a time when they possessed gold in large quantities, and pearls too, gathered from the depths of the Vermillion sea. It is gone. The Jesuit padres could tell whither."

"But this man? El Sol?"

"He is a chief. He has not lost all his gold. He still holds enough to serve him; and it is not likely that the padres will coax it from him for either beads or vermillion. No; he has seen the world, and has learnt the all-pervading value of that shining metal."

"But his sister—is she too educated?"

"No. Poor Luna is still a savage; but he instructs her in many things. He has been absent for several years. He has returned but lately to his tribe."

"Their names are strange—the 'Sun'—the 'Moon!'"

"They were given by the Spaniards of Sonora; but they are only translations or synonymes of their Indian appellations. That is common upon the frontier."

"Why are they here?"

I put this question with hesitation; as I knew there might be some peculiar history connected with the answer.

"Partly," replied Seguin, "from gratitude I believe, to myself. I rescued El Sol when a boy, out of the hands of the Navajoes. Perhaps there is still another reason. But come!" continued he, apparently wishing to give a turn to the conversation, "you shall know our Indian friends. You are to be

companions for a time. He is a scholar, and will interest you. Take care of your heart with the gentle Luna. Vicente! Go. to the tent of the Coco chief. Ask him to come, and drink a cup of Paso wine. Tell him to bring his sister with him."

The servant hurried away through the camp. While he was gone, we conversed about the feat which the Coco had performed with his rifle.

"I never knew him to fire," remarked Seguin, "without hitting his mark. There is something mysterious about that. His aim is unerring; and it seems to be, on his part, an act of pure volition. There may be some guiding principle in the mind, independent of either strength of nerve or sharpness of sight. He and another are the only persons I ever knew to possess this singular power."

The last part of this speech was uttered in a half soliloquy; and Seguin, after deli-

vering it, remained for some moments silent and abstracted.

Before the conversation was resumed, El Sol and his sister entered the tent; and Seguin introduced us to each other. In a few moments, we were engaged—El Sol, the Doctor, Seguin, and myself—in an animated conversation. The subject was not horses, nor guns, nor scalps, nor war, nor blood, nor aught connected with the horrid calling of that camp. We were discussing a point in the pacific science of botany—the relationship of the different forms of the cactus family!

I had studied this science, and I felt that my knowledge of it was inferior to that of any of my three companions! I was struck with it then—and more when I reflected on it afterwards—the fact of such a conversation—the time—the place—and the men who carried it on!

For nearly two hours we sat, smoking and talking on like subjects!

While we were thus engaged, I observed upon the canvass the shadow of a man. Looking forth—as my position enabled me without rising—I recognised, in the light that streamed out of the tent, a hunting shirt with a worked pipe-holder hanging over the breast!

La Luna sat near her brother, sewing *parflêche* soles upon a pair of moccasons. I noticed that she wore an abstracted air; and, at short intervals, glanced out from the opening of the tent. While we were engrossed with our discussion, she rose silently—though not with any appearance of stealth—and went out.

After a while she returned. I could read the love-light in her eye, as she resumed her occupation.

Old Sol and his sister at length left us; and, shortly after, Seguin, the Doctor, and I, rolled ourselves in our serapés, and lay down to sleep.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WAR-TRAIL.

The band was mounted by earliest dawn; and as the notes of the bugle died away, our horses plashed through the river, crossing to the other side. We soon debouched from the timbered bottom, coming out upon sandy plains that stretched westward to the Mimbres mountains. We rode over these plains in a southerly direction, climbing long ridges of sand that traversed them from east to west. The drift lay in deep furrows; and our horses sank above the

fetlocks as we journeyed. We were crossing the western section of the "Jornada."

We travelled in Indian file. Habit has formed this disposition among Indians and hunters on the march. The tangled paths of the forest, and the narrow defiles of the mountains, admit of no other. Even when passing a plain, our cavalcade was strung out for a quarter of a mile. The *atajo* followed, in charge of the "arrieros."

For the first day of our march, we kept on without "nooning." There was neither grass nor water on the route; and a halt under the hot sun would not have refreshed us.

Early in the afternoon, a dark line became visible, stretching across the plain. As we drew nearer, a green wall rose before us; and we distinguished the groves of cottonwood. The hunters knew it to be the timber on the Paloma. We were soon passing under the shade of its quivering

canopy ; and reaching the banks of a clear stream, we halted for the night.

Our camp was formed without either tents or lodges. Those used on the Del Norté had been left behind in *caché.* An expedition like ours could not be cumbered with camp baggage. Each man's blanket was his house, his bed, and his cloak.

Fires were kindled, and ribs roasted; and, fatigued with our journey—the first day's ride has always this effect—we were soon wrapped in our blankets, and sleeping soundly.

We were summoned, next morning, by the call of the bugle sounding "reveille." The band partook somewhat of a military organization ; and every one knew the signals of the light cavalry.

Our breakfast was soon cooked and eaten; our horses were drawn from their pickets, saddled, and mounted; and, at another signal, we moved forward on the route.

The incidents of our first journey were repeated, with but little variety, for several days in succession. We travelled through a desert country, here and there covered with wild sage and mezquite.

We passed on our route clumps of cacti, and thickets of creosote bushes, that emitted their foul odours as we rode through them. On the fourth evening we camped at a spring, the "Ojo de Vaca," lying on the eastern borders of the Llanos.

Over the western section of this great prairie passes the Apaché war-trail—running southward into Sonora. Near the trail, and overlooking it, a high mountain rises out of the plain. It is called the Piñon.

It was our design to reach this mountain, and caché among the rocks—near a well-known spring—until our enemies should pass; but to effect this we would have to cross the war-trail, and our own tracks would betray us! Here was a diffi-

culty, which had not occurred to Seguin. There was no other point except the Piñon, from which we could certainly see the enemy on their route, and be ourselves hidden. This mountain then must be reached; and how were we to effect it without crossing the trail?

After our arrival at Ojo de Vaca, Seguin drew the men together to deliberate on this matter.

"Let us spread," said a hunter, "and keep wide over the peraira, till we've got clar past the Apash trail. They wont notice a single track hyar and thar, I reckin'."

"Ay, but they will though," rejoined another. "Do ye think an Injun's agoin' to pass a shod horse-track 'ithout follerin it up. No, siree!"

"We kin muffle the hoofs, as far as that goes," suggested the first speaker.

"Wagh! That ud only make it worse.

I tried that dodge once afore, an nearly lost my har for it. He's a blind Injun kin be fooled that-away. 'Twont do no how."

"They're not goin' to be so partickler when they're on the war-trail, I warrant ye. I don't see why it shouldn't do well enough."

Most of the hunters agreed with the former speaker. The Indians would not fail to notice so many muffled tracks; and suspect there was "something in the wind." The idea of "muffling" was therefore abandoned. What next?

The trapper Rube—who, up to this time, had said nothing—now drew the attention of all by abruptly exclaiming "Pish!"

"Well!—what have you to say, old hoss?" inquired one of the hunters.

"Thet yur a set o' cussed fools, one and all o'ee. I kud take the full o' that parairy o' hosses acrosst the Pash-trail, 'ithout making a sign that any Injun's a gwine to

foller—particklerly an Injun on the war beat like them is now."

"How?" asked Seguin.

"I'll tell yur how Cap, ev yur'll tell me what 'ee wants to cross the trail for?"

"Why—to conceal ourselves in the Piñon range—what else?"

"An' how are 'ee gwine to caché in the Peenyun 'ithout water?"

"There is a spring on the side of it—at the foot of the mountain."

"That's true as Scripter. I knows that, but at thet very spring the Injuns 'll cool thur lappers as they go down south'ard. How are 'ee gwine to get at it with this cavayard 'ithout makin' sign? This child don't see that very clur."

"You are right Rube. We cannot touch the Piñon spring without leaving our marks too plainly; and it is the very place where the war-party may make a halt."

"I sees no confoundered use in the hul

on us crossin' the parairy now. We kant hunt buffler till they've passed anyways. So it's this child's idee that a dozen o' us 'll be enough to caché in the Peenyun, and watch for the niggurs a-goin' south. A dozen mout do it safe enough, but not the hul cavayard."

"And would you have the rest to remain here?"

"Not hyur. Let 'em go northart from hyur, and then strike west through the musquite hills. Thur's a crick runs thur, about twenty mile or so this side the trail. They kin git water and grass and caché thur till we sends for 'em."

"But why not remain by this spring, where we have both in plenty?"

"Cap'n, jest becausé some o' the Injun party may take a notion in thur heads to kum this way themselves. I reckin' we had better make blind tracks afore leavin' hyur."

The force of Rube's reasoning was apparent to all; and to none more than Seguin himself. It was resolved to follow his advice at once. The vidette party was detailed; and the rest of the band, with the atajo—after blinding the tracks around the spring—struck off in a north-westerly direction.

They were to travel on to the Mezquit hills, that lay some ten or twelve miles to the north-west of the spring. There they were to cachè by a stream—well known to several of them—and wait until warned to join us.

The vidette party—of whom I was one—moved westward across the prairie.

Rube, Garey, El Sol, and his sister, with Sanchez—a *ci devant* bull-fighter—and half a dozen others, composed the party. Seguin himself was our head and guide.

Before leaving the Ojo de Vaca, we had stripped the shoes off our horses—filling the nail-holes with clay—so that their tracks

would be taken for those of wild mustangs! Such were the precautions of men, who knew that their lives might be the forfeit of a single footprint.

As we approached the point, where the war-trail intersected the prairie, we separated and deployed to distances of a half-mile each. In this manner we rode forward to the Piñon mountain, where we came together again, and turned northward along the foot of the range.

It was sundown, when we reached the spring—having ridden all day across the plain. We descried it, as we approached, close in to the mountain foot, and marked by a grove of cottonwoods and willows. We did not take our horses near the water; but, having reached a defile in the mountain, we rode into it, and cached them in a thicket of nut-pine. In this thicket we spent the night.

With the first light of morning we made a reconnoisance of our caché.

In front of us was a low ridge covered with loose rocks and straggling trees of the nut pine. This ridge separated the defile from the plain; and from its top, screened by a thicket of the pines, we commanded a view of the water, as well as the trail, and the Llanos stretching away to the north, south, and east. It was just the sort of hiding-place we required for our object.

In the morning it became necessary to descend for water. For this purpose we had provided ourselves with a mule bucket, and extra *xuages*. We visited the spring, and filled our vessels—taking care to leave no traces of our footsteps in the mud.

We kept constant watch during the first day, but no Indians appeared. Deer and antelopes, with a small gang of buffaloes came to the spring-branch to drink; and then roamed off again over the green mea-

dows. It was a tempting sight, for we could easily have crept within shot; but we dared not touch them. We knew that the Indian dogs would scent their slaughter.

In the evening we went again for water—making the journey twice—as our animals began to suffer from thirst. We adopted the same precautions as before.

Next day we again watched the horizon to the north with eager eyes. Seguin had a small pocket glass, and we could see the prairie with it for a distance of nearly thirty miles; but as yet no enemy could be descried.

The third day passed with a like result; and we began to fear that the warriors had taken some other trail.

Another circumstance rendered us uneasy. We had eaten nearly the whole of our provisions, and were now chewing the raw nuts of the piñon. We dared not kindle a fire to roast them. Indians can "read" the smoke at a great distance.

The fourth day arrived, and still no "signs" on the horizon to the north. Our tasajo was all eaten, and we began to hunger. The nuts did not satisfy us. The game was in plenty at the spring, and mottling the grassy plain. One proposed to lie among the willows, and shoot an antelope or a black-tailed deer—of which there were troops.

"We dare not," said Seguin, "their dogs would find the blood. It would betray us."

"I can procure one without letting a drop," rejoined a Mexican hunter.

"How?" inquired several in a breath.

The man pointed to his lasso.

"But your tracks—you would make deep footmarks in the struggle?"

"We can blind them, Captain," rejoined the man.

"You may try then," assented the chief.

The Mexican unfastened the lasso from his saddle; and, taking a companion, proceeded

to the spring. They crept in among the willows, and lay in wait. We watched them from the ridge.

They had not remained more than a quarter of an hour, when a herd of antelopes was seen approaching from the plain. These walked directly for the spring—one following the other, in Indian file. They were soon close in to the willows, where the hunters had concealed themselves. Here they suddenly halted, throwing up their heads, and snuffing the air. They had scented danger, but it was too late for the foremost to turn and lope off.

"Yonder goes the lasso!" cried one.

We saw the noose flying in the air, and settling over his head. The herd suddenly wheeled; but the loop was around the neck of their leader; and after three or four skips, he sprang up, and falling upon his back, lay motionless!

The hunter came out from the willows,

and, taking up the animal—now choked dead—carried him toward the entrance of the defile. His companion followed, blinding the tracks of both. In a few minutes they had reached us. The antelope was skinned, and eaten raw, in the blood! * * *

Our horses grow thin with hunger and thirst. We fear to go too often to the water, though we become less cautious as the hours pass. Two more antelopes are lassoed by the expert hunter.

The night of the fourth day is a clear moonlight. The Indians often march by moonlight—particularly when on the war-trail. We keep our vidette stationed during the night, as in the day. On this night we look out with more hopes than usual. It is such a lovely night—a full moon, clear and calm.

We are not disappointed. Near midnight the vidette awakes us. There are dark forms on the sky, away to the north. It may be

buffaloes, but we see that they are approaching.

We stand, one and all, straining our eyes through the white air, and away over the silvery sward. There are glancing objects —arms, it must be. "Horses! horsemen! They are Indians!"

"O God! comrades, we are mad! Our horses—*they may neigh!*"

We bound after our leader down the hill, over the rocks, and through the trees. We run for the thicket where our animals are tied. We may be too late, for horses can hear each other miles off; and the slightest concussion vibrates afar through the elastic atmosphere of these high plateaus. We reach the caballada. What is Seguin doing? He has torn the blanket from under his saddle, and is muffling the head of his horse!

We follow his example—without exchanging a word—for we know this is the only plan to pursue.

In a few minutes we feel secure again, and return to our watch station on the height. * * *

We had shaved our time closely; for, on reaching the hill-top, we could hear the exclamations of Indians, the "thump, thump" of hoofs on the hard plain, and an occasional neigh, as their horses scented the water. The foremost were advancing to the spring; and we could see the long line of mounted men, stretching in their deployment, to the far horizon!

Closer they came, and we could distinguish the pennons and glittering points of their spears. We could see their half naked bodies gleaming in the clear moonlight!

In a short time the foremost of them had ridden up to the bushes—halting as they came, and giving their animals to drink. Then one by one wheeled out of the water; and, trotting a short distance over the prairie, flung themselves to the ground, and commenced unharnessing their horses!

It was evidently their intention to camp for the night.

For nearly an hour they came filing forward—until two thousand warriors, with their horses, dotted the plain below us!

We stood observing their movements. We had no fear of being seen ourselves. We were lying with our bodies behind the rocks, and our faces partially screened by the foliage of the piñon trees. We could see and hear with distinctness all that was passing—for the savages were not over three hundred yards from our position! * *

They proceed to picket their horses in a wide circle, far out on the plain. There the grama grass is longer and more luxuriant than in the immediate neighbourhood of the spring. They strip the animals, and bring away their horse-furniture,—consisting of hair-bridles, buffalo robes, and skins of the grizzly bear. Few have saddles. Indians do not generally use them on a war expedition.

Each man strikes his spear into the ground, and rests against it his shield, bow, and quiver. He places his robe or skin beside it. That is his tent and bed.

The spears are soon aligned upon the prairie—forming a front of several hundred yards—and thus they have pitched their camp with a quickness and regularity far outstripping the chasseurs of Vincennes.

They are encamped in two parties. There are two bands—the Apaché and Navajo. The latter is much the smaller, and rests farther off from our position.

We hear them cutting and chopping with their tomahawks among the thickets at the foot of the mountain. We can see them carrying fagots out upon the plain, piling them together, and setting them on fire.

Many fires are soon blazing brightly. The savages squat around them, cooking their suppers. We can see the paint glittering on their faces and naked breasts. They

are of many hues. Some are red, as though they were smeared with blood. Some appear of a jetty blackness. Some black on one side of the face, and red or white on the other. Some are mottled, like hounds; and some striped and chequered. Their cheeks and breasts are tatooed with the forms of animals—wolves, panthers, bears, buffaloes—and other hideous devices, plainly discernible under the blaze of the pinewood fires. Some have a red hand painted on their bosoms; and not a few exhibit as their device the death's head and cross-bones!

All these are their "coats" of arms, symbolical of the "medicine" of the wearer; adopted, no doubt, from like silly fancies as those which put the crest upon the carriage, on the lacquey's button, or the brass seal-stamp of the merchant's clerk.

There is vanity in the wilderness. In savage, as in civilized life, there is a snobdom.

"What do we see? Bright helmets—brazen and steel—with nodding plumes of the ostrich! These upon savages! Whence came these?"

"From the cuirassiers of Chihuahua. Poor devils! They were roughly handled upon one occasion by these savage lancers."

We see the red meat sputtering over the fires upon spits of willow rods. We see the Indians fling the piñon nuts into the cinders, and then draw them forth again, parched and smoking. We see them light their clay-stone pipes, and send forth clouds of blue vapour. We see them gesticulate as they relate their red adventures to one another. We hear them shout, and chatter, and laugh like mountebanks! How unlike the *forest* Indian!

For two hours we watch their movements, and listen to their voices. Then the horse-guard is detailed, and marches off to the caballada; and the Indians, one after

another, spread their skins, roll themselves in their blankets, and sleep.

The fires cease to blaze, but by the moonlight we can distinguish the prostrate bodies of the savages. White objects are moving among them. They are the dogs, prowling after the debris of their supper. These run from point to point, snarling at one another, and barking at the coyotés that sneak around the skirts of the camp.

Out upon the prairie, the horses are still awake and busy. We can hear them stamping their hoofs, and cropping the rich pasture. Erect forms are seen standing at intervals along the line. These are the guards of the caballada.

CHAPTER V.

THREE DAYS IN THE TRAP.

Our attention was now turned to our own situation. Dangers and difficulties suddenly presented themselves to our minds.

"What if they should stay here to hunt!"

The thought seemed to occur to all of us at the same instant; and we faced each other with looks of apprehension and dismay.

"It is not improbable," said Seguin, in a low and emphatic voice. "It is plain they have no supply of meat, and how are they to pass to the south without it? They must hunt here, or elsewhere. Why not here?"

"If so, we 're in a nice trap!" interrupted a hunter, pointing first to the embouchure of the defile, and then to the mountain. "How are we to get out? I'd like to know that."

Our eyes followed the direction indicated by the speaker. In front of the ravine, in which we were, extended the line of the Indian camp—not a hundred yards distant from the rocks that lay around its entrance! There was an Indian sentinel still nearer; but it would be impossible to pass out—even were he asleep—without encountering the dogs that prowled in numbers around the camp!

Behind us, the mountain rose vertically like a wall. It was plainly impassable. We were fairly "in the trap."

"Carrai!" exclaimed one of the men, "we will die of hunger and thirst if they stay to hunt!"

"We may die sooner," rejoined another, "if they take a notion in their heads, to wander up the gully!"

This was not improbable, though it was but little likely. The ravine was a sort of *cul de sac*, that entered the mountain in a slanting direction, and ended at the bottom of the cliff. There was no object to attract our enemies into it—unless indeed they might come up in search of piñon nuts. Some of their dogs, too, might wander up, hunting for food, or attracted by the scent of our horses. These were probabilities; and we trembled as each of them was suggested.

"If they do not find us," said Seguin, encouragingly, "we may live for a day or two on the piñons. When these fail us, one of our horses must be killed. How much water have we?"

"Thank our luck, Captain, the gourds are nearly full."

"But our poor animals must suffer."

"There is no danger of thirst," said El Sol, looking downward, "while these last;"

and he struck with his foot a large round mass that grew among the rocks. It was the spheroidal cactus. "See!" continued he, "there are hundreds of them!"

All present knew the meaning of this, and regarded the cacti with a murmur of satisfaction.

"Comrades!" said Seguin, "it is of no use to weary ourselves. Let those sleep who can. One can keep watch yonder, while another stays up here. Go, Sanchez!" and the chief pointed down the ravine to a spot that commanded a view of its mouth.

The sentinel walked off, and took his stand in silence. The rest of us descended, and after looking to the muffling of our horses, returned to the station of the vidette upon the hill. Here we rolled ourselves in our blankets; and lying down among the rocks, slept out the night.

* * * * *

We are awake before dawn, and peering

through the leaves with feelings of keen solicitude.

There is no movement in the Indian camp! It is a bad indication. Had they intended to travel on, they would have been stirring before this. They are always on the route before daybreak. These "signs" strengthen our feelings of apprehension.

The grey light begins to spread over the prairie. There is a white band along the eastern sky. There are noises in the camp. There are voices. Dark forms move about among the upright spears. Tall savages stride over the plain. Their robes of skins are wrapped around their shoulders to protect them from the raw air of the morning. They carry fagots. They are re-kindling the fires!

Our men talk in whispers, as we lie straining our eyes to catch every movement.

"It's plain they intend to make a stay of it."

"Ay! we're in for it, that's sartin. Wagh! I wonder how long thar a-goin' to squat hyar any how."

"Three days at the least—may be four or five."

"Great Gollys! we will be froze in half the time."

"What would they be doin' here so long? I warrant ye they'll clar out as soon as they can."

"So they will? but how can they in less time?"

"They can get all the meat they want in a day. See! yonder's buffalo a plenty; look! away—yonder!" and the speaker points to several black objects outlined against the brightening sky. It is a gang of buffaloes.

"That's true enough. In half a day I warrant they kin get all the meat they want; but how are they a-goin' to jirk it in less than three? That's what I want to know."

"*Es verdad!*" says one of the Mexicans, a cibolero, "*Tres dias, al menos!*" (it is true! three days at the least!)

"Ay, hombré; an' with a smart chance o' sunshine at that, I guess."

This conversation is carried on by two or three of the men in a low tone, but loud enough for the rest of us to overhear it.

It reveals a new phase of our dilemma on which we have not before reflected. Should the Indians stay to "jerk" their meat we will be in extreme danger from thirst, as well as of being discovered in our caché.

We know that the process of jerking buffalo beef takes three days and that with a hot sun, as the hunter has intimated. This, with the first day required for hunting, will keep us four days in the ravine!

The prospect is appalling. We feel that death or the extreme torture of thirst is before us. We have no fear of hunger.

Our horses are in the grove, and our knives in our belts. We can live for weeks upon them; but will the cacti assuage the thirst of men and horses for a period of three or four days? This is a question no one can answer. It has often relieved the hunter for a short period, enabling him to crawl on to the water; but for days?

The trial will soon commence. The day has fairly broken. The Indians spring to their feet. About one-half of them draw the pickets of their horses, and lead them to the water. They adjust their bridles, pluck up their spears, snatch their bows, shoulder their quivers, and leap on horseback!

After a short consultation they gallop off to the eastward. In half an hour's time, we can see them "running" the buffalo far out upon the prairie—piercing them with their arrows, and impaling them on their long lances!

Those who have remained behind, lead their horses down to the spring-branch, and back again to the grass. Now they chop down young trees, and carry fagots to the fires. See! they are driving long stakes into the ground, and stretching ropes from one to the other! For what purpose? We know too well.

"Ha! look yonder," mutters one of the hunters, as this is first noticed; "yonder goes the jerking line! Now we're caged in airnest, I reckin'."

"Por todos santos, es verdad!"

"Carrambo! carajo! chingaro!" growls the cibolero, who well knows the meaning of those stakes and lines.

We watch with a fearful interest the movements of the savages.

We have now no longer any doubt of their intention to remain for several days.

The stakes are soon erected, running for a hundred yards or more along the front of the encampment. The savages await

the return of their hunters. Some mount and scour off toward the scene of the buffalo battue, still going on, far out upon the plain.

We peer through the leaves with great caution, for the day is bright, and the eyes of our enemies are quick, and scan every object. We speak only in whispers—though our voices could not be heard if we conversed a little louder, but fear makes us fancy that they might. We are all concealed, except our eyes. These glance through small loop-holes in the foliage.

The Indian hunters have been gone about two hours. We now see them returning over the prairie in straggling parties.

They ride slowly back. Each brings his load before him on the withers of his horse. They have large masses of red flesh—freshly skinned and smoking. Some carry the sides and quarters; others the hump-ribs, the tongue, heart, and liver—*the petites morceaux*—wrapped up in the skins of the slaughtered animals.

They arrive in camp, and fling their loads to the ground.

Now begins a scene of noise and confusion. The savages run to and fro, whooping, chattering, laughing, and dancing. They draw their long scalping-knives, and hew off broad steaks. They spit them over the blazing fires. They cut out the hump ribs. They tear off the white fat, and stuff the *boudins*. They split the brown liver, eating it raw! They break the shanks with their tomahawks, and delve out the savoury marrow, and, through all these operations, they whoop, and chatter, and laugh, and dance over the ground like so many madmen!

This scene lasts for more than an hour.

Fresh parties of hunters mount and ride off. Those who remain, cut the meat into long thin strips, and hang it over the lines—already prepared for this purpose. It is thus left to be baked by the sun, into "*tasajo*."

We know part of what is before us. It is a

fearful prospect; but men, like those who compose the band of Seguin, do not despond while the shadow of a hope remains. It is a barren spot indeed, where they cannot find resources.

"We needn't holler till we're hurt," says one of the hunters.

"If yer call an empty belly a hurt," rejoins another, "I've got it already. I kud jest eat a raw jackass 'ithout skinnin' him."

"Come, fellers!" cries a third, "let's gramble for a wheen o' these peenyuns."

Following this suggestion, we commence searching for the nuts of the pine. We find to our dismay, that there is but a limited supply of this precious fruit—not enough, either on the trees or the ground, to sustain us for two days!"

"By Gosh!" exclaims one, "we'll have to draw for our critters."

"Well;" an' if we have to—time enough yet a bit, I guess. We'll bite our claws a while first."

The water is distributed in a small cup. There is still a little left in the xuages; but our poor horses suffer.

"Let us look to them," says Seguin; and drawing his knife, he commences skinning one of the cacti. We follow his example.

We carefully pare off the volutes and spikelets. A cool gummy liquid exudes from the opened vessels. We break the short stems; and, lifting the green globe-like masses, carry them to the thicket, and place them before our animals. These seize the succulent plants greedily, crunch them between their teeth, and swallow both sap and fibres. It is food and drink to them. Thank heaven! we may yet save them!

This act is repeated several times, until they have had enough.

We keep two videttes constantly on the look-out—one upon the hill; the other commanding the mouth of the defile. The rest of us go through the ravine, along

the sides of the ridge, in search of the cones of the piñon.

Thus our first day is spent.

The Indian hunters keep coming into their camp until a late hour, bringing with them their burdens of buffalo flesh. Fires blaze over the ground, and the savages sit around them, cooking and eating, nearly all the night!

On the day following, they do not rouse themselves until a late hour. It is a day of lassitude and idleness, for the meat is hanging over the strings; and they can only wait upon it. They lounge around the camp, mending their bridles and lassos, or looking to their weapons. They lead their horses to the water, and then picket them on fresh ground. They cut large pieces of meat, and broil them over the fires. Hundreds of them are at all times engaged in this last occupation. They seem to eat continually!

Their dogs are busy too, growling over the knife-stripped bones. They are not likely to leave their feast. They will not stray up the ravine while it lasts. In this thought we find consolation.

The sun is hot all the second day, and scorches us in the dry defile. It adds to our thirst—but we do not regret this so much, knowing it will hasten the departure of the savages. Towards evening, the tasajo begins to look brown and shrivelled. Another such day, and it will be ready for packing!

Our water is out; and we chew the succulent slices of the cactus. It relieves our thirst without quenching it!

Our appetite of hunger is growing stronger. We have eaten all the piñons, and nothing remains but to slaughter one of our horses.

"Let us hold out till to-morrow," suggests one. "Give the poor brutes a chance. Who knows but what they may flit in the morning?"

This proposition is voted in the affirmative. No hunter cares to risk losing his horse —especially when out upon the prairies.

Gnawed by hunger, we lie waiting for the third day.

The morning breaks at last, and we crawl forward, as usual, to watch the movements of the camp. The savages sleep late, as on yesterday ; but they arouse themselves at length; and, after watering their animals, commence cooking. We see the crimson steaks, and the juicy ribs, smoking over the fires; and the savoury odours are wafted to us on the breeze. Our appetites are whetted to a painful keenness. We can endure no longer. A horse must die!

Whose? Mountain law will soon decide.

Eleven white pebbles and a black one are thrown into the water bucket, and, one by one, we are blinded and led forward.

I tremble as I place my hand in the vessel. It is like throwing the die for my own life.

"Thank heaven! My Moro is safe!"

One of the Mexicans has drawn the black.

"Thar's luck in that," exclaims a hunter. "Good fat mustang better than poor bull any day!"

The devoted horse is in fact a well-conditioned animal; and, placing our videttes again, we proceed to the thicket to slaughter him.

We set about it with great caution. We tie him to a tree, and hopple his fore and hind feet, lest he may struggle. We purpose bleeding him to death.

The cibolero has unsheathed his long knife, while a man stands by, holding the bucket to catch the precious fluid—the blood! Some have cups in their hands, ready to drink it as it flows!

We are startled by an unusual sound. We look through the leaves. A large grey animal is standing by the edge of the thicket, gazing in at us. It is wolfish-looking. Is it a wolf? No. *It is an Indian dog!*

The knife is stayed. Each man draws his own. We approach the animal, and endeavour to coax it nearer. But no. It suspects our intentions, utters a low growl, and runs away down the defile.

We follow it with our eyes. The owner of the doomed horse is the vidette. The dog must pass him to get out; and he stands with his long lance ready to receive it.

The animal sees himself intercepted, turns and runs back, and, again turning, makes a desperate rush to pass the vidette. As he nears the latter, he utters a loud howl. The next moment he is impaled upon the lance!

Several of us rush up the hill to ascertain if the howling has attracted the attention of the savages. There is no unusual movement among them. They have not heard it.

The dog is divided, and devoured—before his quivering flesh has time to get cold! The horse is reprieved!

Again we feed our animals on the cooling cactus. This occupies us for some time. When we return to the hill, a glad sight is before us. We see the warriors seated around their fires, renewing the paint upon their bodies! We know the meaning of this.

The tasajo is nearly black. Thanks to the hot sun, it will soon be ready for packing.

Some of the Indians are engaged in poisoning the points of their arrows! All these "signs" inspire us with fresh courage. They will soon march; if not to-night, by daybreak on the morrow.

We lie congratulating ourselves, and watching every movement of their camp. Our hopes continue rising as the day falls.

Ha! there is an unusual stir. Some order has been issued. "Voila!" "Mira! Mira!" "See!" "Look-look!" are the half-whispered ejaculations that break from the hunters,—as this is observed.

"By the livin' catamout, thar a goin' to mizzle!"

We see the savages pull down the tasajo, and tie it in bunches. Then every man runs out for his horse. The pickets are drawn; the animals are led in, and watered; they are bridled; the robes are thrown over them and girted. The warriors pluck up their lances, sling their quivers, seize their shields and bows, and leap lightly upon horseback. The next moment they form, with the rapidity of thought; and, wheeling in their tracks, ride off in single file, heading to the south.

The larger band has passed. The smaller—the Navajoes—following the same trail. No! The latter has suddenly filed to the left; and is crossing the prairie toward the east,—toward the spring of the Ojo de Vaca!

CHAPTER VI.

THE DIGGERS.

Our first impulse was to rush down the ravine, satisfy our thirst at the spring, and our hunger, on the half-polished bones that were strewed over the prairie. Prudence, however restrained us.

"Wait till they're clar gone," said Garey. They'll be out 'o sight in three skips 'o a goat."

"Yes! stay where we are a bit," added another; "some of them may ride back—something may be forgotten."

This was not improbable; and, in spite of the promptings of our appetites, we resolved to remain a while longer in the defile.

We descended straightway into the thicket to make preparations for moving—to saddle our horses, and take off their mufflings; which, by this, had nearly blinded them. Poor brutes! they seemed to know that relief was at hand.

While we were engaged in these operations, our vidette was kept at the top of the hill; to watch both bands, and warn us when their heads should sink to the prairie level.

"I wonder why the Navajoes have gone by the Ojo de Vaca;" remarked our chief, with an apparent anxiety in his manner. "It is well our comrades did not remain there."

"They'll be tired o' waitin' on us, whar they are," rejoined Garey; "unless black-tails is plentier among them musquits, than I think for."

"Vaya;" exclaimed Sanchez, "they may thank the Santissima, they were not in our company. I'm spent to a skeleton,—*Mira! Carrai!*"

'Our horses were at length bridled and saddled, and our lassos coiled up. Still the vidette had not warned us! We grew every moment more impatient.

"Come!" cried one; "hang it! they're far enough now. They're not a goin' to be gapin' back all the way. They're looking a-head, i'm bound. Golly! Thar's fine shines afore-them."

We could resist no longer We called out to the vidette. He could just see the heads of the hindmost.

"That will do," cried Seguin; "Come! take your horses!"

The men obeyed with alacrity; and we all moved down the ravine, leading our animals.

We pressed forward to the opening. A young man, the pueblo servant of Seguin—

was a-head of the rest. He was impatient to reach the water. He had gained the mouth of the defile, when we saw him fall back with frightened looks, dragging at his horse, and exclaiming;

"Mi amo! mi amo! todavia son!" (Master, master, they are here yet!)

"Who?" inquired Seguin, running forward in haste.

"The Indians, master—the Indians!"

"You are mad! Where did you see them?"

"In the camp, master—look yonder!"

I pressed forward with Seguin to the rocks that lay along the entrance of the defile. We looked cautiously over. A singular sight met our eyes.

The camp ground was lying as the Indians had left it. The stakes were still standing. The shaggy hides of the buffaloes, and piles of their bones, were strewn upon the plain. Hundreds of coyotes were loping

back and forward, snarling at one another, or pursuing one of their number who had picked up a nicer morsel than his companions. The fires were still smouldering; and the wolves galloped through the ashes, raising them in yellow clouds.

But there was a sight stranger than all this —a startling sight to me. Five or six forms —*almost* human—were moving about among the fires, collecting the debris of skins and bones, and quarrelling with the wolves that barked round them in troops. Five or six others—similar forms—were seated around a pile of burning wood, silently gnawing at half roasted ribs! "Can they—yes—they are human beings!"

I was for a moment awe-struck, as I gazed at the shrivelled and dwarfy bodies—the long ape-like arms—and huge disproportioned heads, from which fell their hair in snaky tangles, black and matted!

But one or two appeared to have any article of dress; and that was a ragged

breech-clout. The others were naked as the wild beasts around them—naked from head to foot!"

It was a horrid sight to look upon these fiend-like dwarfs squatted around the fires, holding up half-naked bones in their long wrinkled arms, and tearing off the flesh with their glistening teeth! It was a horrid sight indeed; and it was some moments, before I could recover sufficiently from my amazement to inquire who or what they were. I did so at length.

"Los Yamparicos," answered the cibolero.

"Who?" I asked again.

"Los Indios Yamparicos, Señor."

"The Diggers—the Diggers," said a hunter, thinking that would better explain the strange apparitions.

"Yes, they are Digger Indians," added Seguin. "Come on—we have nothing to fear from them."

"But we have somethin' to *git* from

them," rejoined one of the hunters, with a significant look. "Digger plew good as any other—worth jest as much as 'Pash chief."

"There must no one fire," said Seguin, in a firm tone. "It is too soon yet; look yonder!" and he pointed over the plain, where two or three glancing objects—the helmets of the retreating warriors—could still be seen above the grass.

"How are we goin' to get them, then, Captain?" inquired the hunter. "They'll beat us to the rocks—they kin run like scared dogs."

"Better let them go, poor devils!" said Seguin, seemingly unwilling that blood should be spilled so wantonly.

"No, Captain," rejoined the same speaker, "we won't fire, but we'll *git* them, if we kin, 'ithout it. Boys, follow me down this way!"

And the man was about guiding his horse

in among the loose rocks, so as to pass unperceived between the dwarfs and the mountain.

But the brutal fellow was frustrated in his design; for at that moment, El Sol and his sister appeared in the opening; and their brilliant habiliments caught the eyes of the Diggers. Like startled deer, they sprang to their feet; and ran, or rather flew, toward the foot of the mountain. The hunters galloped to intercept them; but they were too late. Before they could come up, the Diggers had dived into the crevices of the rocks, or were seen climbing like chamois along the cliffs, far out of reach!

One of the hunters only—Sanchez—succeeded in making a capture. His victim had reached a high ledge, and was scrambling along it, when the lasso of the bull-fighter settled around his neck. The next moment he was plucked out into the air, and fell with a "cranch" upon the rocks!

I rode forward to look at him. He was dead. He had been crushed by the fall—in fact, mangled to a shapeless mass—and exhibited a most loathsome and hideous sight.

The unfeeling hunter recked not of this. With a coarse jest, he stooped over the body; and, severing the scalp, stuck it, reeking and bloody, behind the waist of his calzoneros!

CHAPTER VII.

DACOMA.

We all now hurried forward to the spring; and, dismounting, turned our horses' heads to the water—leaving them to drink at will. We had no fears of their running away.

Our own thirst required slaking, as much as theirs; and, rushing into the branch, we poured the cold water down our throats in cup-fulls. We felt as though we should never be surfeited; but another appetite, equally strong, lured us away from the spring, and we ran over the camp-ground, in search of the means to gratify it. We

scattered the coyotés and white wolves with our shouts; and drove them with missiles from the ground.

We were about stooping to pick up the dust-covered morsels, when a strange exclamation—from one of the hunters—caused us to look hastily round.

"Malraya! camarados, mira el arco!"

The Mexican, who uttered these words, stood pointing to an object that lay upon the ground, at his feet. We ran up to ascertain what it was.

"Caspita!" again ejaculated the man. "It is a *white* bow!"

"A white bow, by Gosh!" echoed Garey.

"A white bow!" shouted several others, eyeing the object with looks of astonishment and alarm.

"That belonged to a big warrior, I'll sartify," said Garey.

"Ay!" added another, "an' one that'll ride back for it, as soon as—holys! look yonder! he's coming by —."

Our eyes rolled over the prairie together—eastward, as the speaker pointed. An object was just visible low down on the horizon, like a moving blazing star! It was not that. At a glance we all knew what it was. It was a helmet, flashing under the sunbeam, as it rose and fell to the measured gallop of a horse!

"To the willows, men! to the willows!" shouted Seguin. "Drop the bow! Leave it where it was. To your horses. Lead them! Crouch! crouch!"

We all ran to our horses; and, seizing the bridles, half-led, half-dragged them within the willow thicket. We leaped into our saddles, so as to be ready for any emergency; and sat peering through the leaves that screened us.

"Shall we fire as he comes up, Captain?' asked one of the men.

"No."

"We kin take him nicely, just as he stoops for the bow?"

"No! not for your lives!"

"What then, Captain?"

"Let him take it, and go," was Seguin's reply.

"Why, Captain? what's that for?"

"Fools! Do you not see that the whole tribe would be back upon our trail, before midnight? Are you mad? Let him go. He may not notice our tracks, as our horses are not shod. If so, let him go as he came, I tell you."

"But how, Captain, if he squints yonder-away?"

Garey, as he said this, pointed to the rocks at the foot of the mountain.

"Sac r-r-re dieu—the Digger!" exclaimed Seguin, his countenance changing expression.

The body lay on a conspicuous point, on its face—the crimson skull turned upward and outward—so that it could hardly fail to attract the eye of any one coming in from

the plain. Several coyotés had already climbed up on the slab where it lay; and were smelling around it—seemingly not caring to touch the hideous morsel!

"He's bound to see it, Captain," added the hunter.

"If so, we must take him with the lance, the lasso, or alive. No gun must be fired. They might still hear it; and would be on us, before we could get round the mountain. No; sling your guns! Let those who have lances and lassos get them in readiness."

"When would you have us make the dash, Captain?"

"Leave that to me. Perhaps he may dismount for the bow; or, if not, he may ride into the spring to water his horse; then we can surround him. If he see the Digger, he may pass up to examine it more closely. In that case we can intercept him without difficulty. Be patient! I will give you the signal."

During all this time, the Navajo was coming up in a regular gallop! As the dialogue ended, he had got within about three hundred yards of the spring; and still pressed forward, without slacking his pace. We kept our gaze fixed upon him in breathless silence, eyeing both man and horse.

It was a splendid sight! The horse was a large coal-black mustang, with fiery eyes, and a red open nostril. He was foaming at the mouth, and the white flakes had clouted his neck, counter, and shoulders. He was wet all over, and glittered as he moved with the play of his proud flanks. The rider was naked from the waist up—excepting his helmet and plumes, and some ornaments that glistened on his neck, bosom, and wrists. A tunic-like skirt—bright and embroidered—covered his hips and thighs. Below the knee, his legs were naked ending in a buskined moccason, that fitted tightly to the ankle. Unlike the Apachés, there was no

paint upon his body; and his bronze complexion shone with the hue of health. His features were noble and warlike, his eye bold and piercing, and his long black hair swept away behind him, mingling with the tail of his horse! He rode upon a Spanish saddle; with his lance poised on the stirrup, and resting lightly against his right arm. His left was thrust through the strap of a white shield; and a quiver with its feathered shafts peeped over his shoulder. His bow was before him.

It was a splendid sight—both horse and rider, as they rose together over the green swells of the prairie. A picture, more like that of some Homeric hero, than a savage of the "wild West."

"Wagh!" exclaimed one of the hunters in an undertone, "how they glitter! Look at that ar head-piece—its fairly a-blazin!"

"Aye;" rejoined Garey, "we may thank the piece o' brass. We'd have been in as

ugly a fix, as he's in now, if we hadn't sighted it in time. What!" continued the trapper, his voice rising with earnestness, "Dacoma, by the Etarnal! The second chief of the Navajoes!"

I turned toward Seguin, to witness the effect of this announcement. The Maricopa was leaning over to him, muttering some words in an unknown tongue, and gesticulating with energy. I recognised the name "Dacoma," and there was an expression of fierce hatred in the chief's countenance, as he pointed to the advancing horseman!

"Well, then," answered Seguin, apparently assenting to the wishes of the other, "he shall not escape, whether he sees it or not. But do not use your gun—they are not ten miles off—yonder behind the swell. We can easily surround him. If not, *I* can overtake him on this horse, and here's another."

As Seguin uttered the last speech, he pointed to Moro. "Silence," he continued, lowering his voice, "Hish-sh-sh!"

"The silence became death-like. Each man sat pressing his horse with his knees, as if thus to hold him at rest.

The Navajo had now reached the border of the deserted camp; and, inclining to the left, he galloped down the line, scattering the wolves as he went. He sat leaning to one side, his gaze searching the ground. When nearly opposite to our ambush, he descried the object of his search; and, sliding his feet out of the stirrup, guided his horse so as to shave closely past it. Then, without reining in, or even slacking his pace, he bent over, until his plume swept the earth; and, picking up the bow, swung himself back into the saddle!

"Beautiful!" exclaimed the bull-fighter.

"By Gosh! it's a pity to kill him," mut-

tered a hunter; and a low murmur of admiration was heard among the men.

After a few more springs, the Indian suddenly wheeled, and was about to gallop back, when his eye was caught by the ensanguined object upon the rock. He reined in with a jerk, until the hips of his horse almost rested upon the prairie; and sat gazing upon the body with a look of surprise!

"Beautiful!" again exclaimed Sanchez, "Carrambo, beautiful!"

It was, in effect, as fine a picture as ever the eye looked upon. The horse with his tail scattered upon the ground—with crest erect, and breathing nostril, quivering under the impulse of his masterly rider—the rider himself, with his glancing helmet and waving plumes—his bronze complexion—his firm and graceful seat—and his eye fixed in the gaze of wonder!

It was, as Sanchez had said it, a beautiful

picture—a living statue; and all of us were filled with admiration as we looked upon it. Not one of the party, with perhaps an exception, should have liked to fire the shot, that would have tumbled it from its pedestal!

Horse and man remained in this attitude for some moments. Then the expression of the rider's countenance suddenly changed. His eye wandered with an inquiring and somewhat terrified look. It rested upon the water—still muddy with the trampling of our horses!

One glance was sufficient; and, with a quick strong jerk upon the bridle, the savage horseman wheeled, and struck out for the prairie!

Our charging signal had been given at the same instant; and, springing forward, we shot out of the copsewood in a body.

We had to cross the rivulet. Seguin was some paces in advance, as we rode forward

to it. I saw his horse suddenly baulk, stumble over the bank, and roll headlong into the water!

The rest of us went plashing through. I did not stop to look back. I knew that, *now*, the taking of the Indian was life or death to all of us; and I struck my spur deeply, and strained forward in the pursuit.

For some time we all rode together in a dense "clump." When fairly out on the plain, we saw the Indian ahead of us about a dozen lengths of his horse; and one and all felt with dismay, that he was keeping his distance, if not actually increasing it!

We had forgotten the condition of our animals. They were faint with hunger, and stiff from standing so long in the ravine. Moreover, they had just drunk to a surfeit.

I soon found that I was forging ahead of my companions. The superior swiftness of Moro gave me the advantage. El Sol was still before me. I saw him circling his

lasso. I saw him launch it, and suddenly jerk up. I saw the loop sliding over the hips of the flying mustang. He had missed his aim!

He was re-coiling the rope as I shot past him, and I noticed his look of chagrin and disappointment.

My Arab had now warmed to the chase; and I was soon far ahead of my comrades. I perceived, too, that I was closing upon the Navajo. Every spring brought me nearer, until there were not a dozen lengths between us.

I knew not how to act. I held my rifle in my hands, and could have shot the Indian in the back; but I remembered the injunction of Seguin, and we were now closer to the enemy than ever! I did not know but that we might be in sight of them. I dared not fire.

I was still undecided—whether to use my knife, or endeavour to unhorse the Indian

44888

with my clubbed rifle—when he glanced over his shoulder, and saw that I was alone.

Suddenly he wheeled; and, throwing his lance to a charge, came galloping back. His horse seemed to work without the rein—obedient to his voice and the touch of his knees!

I had just time to throw up my rifle, and parry the charge—which was a right point. I did not parry it successfully. The blade creased my arm, tearing the flesh. The barrel of my rifle caught in the sling of the lance; and the piece was whipped out of my hands!

The wound, the shock, and the loss of my weapon had discomposed me, in the manege of my horse; and it was some time before I could gain the bridle to turn him. My antagonist had wheeled sooner, as I knew by the "hist" of an arrow that scattered the curls over my right ear. As I faced him again, another was on the string; and the

next moment it was sticking through my left arm!

I was now angry; and drawing a pistol from the holster, I cocked it, and galloped forward. I knew it was the only chance for my life.

The Indian, at the same time, dropped his bow; and, bringing his lance to the charge, spurred on to meet me. I was determined not to fire until near and sure of hitting.

We closed at full gallop. Our horses almost touched. I levelled, and pulled trigger. The cap snapped upon my pistol!

The lance-blade glittered in my eyes. Its point was at my breast. Something struck me sharply in the face. It was the ring-loop of a lasso! I saw it settle over the shoulders of the Indian, falling to his elbows. It tightened as it fell. There was a wild yell —a quick jerk of my antagonist's body— the lance flew from his hands—and the next

moment he was plucked out of his saddle, and lying helpless upon the prairie!

His horse met mine, with a concussion that sent both of them to the earth. We rolled and scrambled about, and rose again.

When I came to my feet El Sol was standing over the Navajo, with his knife drawn, and his lasso looped around the arms of his captive!

"The horse! the horse! secure the horse!" shouted Seguin, as he galloped up; and the crowd dashed past me in pursuit of the mustang, that, with trailing bridle, was scouring over the prairie.

In a few minutes the animal was lassoed, and led back to the spot so near being made sacred with my grave.

CHAPTER VIII.

A DINNER WITH TWO DISHES.

El Sol, I have said, was standing over the prostrate Indian. His countenance indicated the blending of two emotions—hate and triumph.

His sister at this moment galloped up; and, leaping from her horse, advanced rapidly forward.

"Behold!" said he, pointing to the Navajo chief; "behold the murderer of our mother!"

The girl uttered a short, sharp exclama-

tion, and, drawing a knife, rushed upon the captive.

"No, Luna!" cried El Sol, putting her aside; "no; we are not assassins. That is not revenge. He shall not yet die. We will show him alive to the squaws of the Maricopa. They shall dance the Mamanchic over this great chief—this warrior captured without a wound!"

El Sol uttered these words in a contemptuous tone. The effect was visible on the Navajo.

"Dog of a Coco!" cried he, making an involuntary struggle to free himself; "dog of a Coco! leagued with the pale robbers. Dog!"

"Ha! you remember me, Dacoma? It is well——"

"Dog!" again ejaculated the Navajo, interrupting him; and the words hissed through his teeth, while his eye glared with an expression of the fiercest malignity.

"He! he!" cried Rube, at this moment galloping up; "he! he! that Injun's as savagerous as a meat-axe. Lamm him, d—n him! Warm his collops wi' the bull-rope; he's warmed my ole mar, Nick syrup him!"

"Let us look to your wound, M. Haller," said Seguin, alighting from his horse, and approaching me, as I thought, with an uneasiness of manner. "How is it? through the flesh? You are safe enough—if, indeed, the arrow—has not been—poisoned. I fear —El Sol! here, quick, my friend! tell me if this point has been dipped?"

"Let us first take it out," replied the Maricopa, coming up; "we will lose no time by that."

The arrow was sticking through my forearm. The barb had pierced through the flesh, until about half of the shaft appeared on the opposite side.

El Sol caught the feather end in both his hands, and snapped it at the lapping. He

then took hold of the barb, and drew it gently out of the wound.

"Let it bleed," said he, "till I have examined the point. It does not look like a war-shaft; but the Navajoes use a very subtle poison. Fortunately I possess the means of detecting it, as well as its antidote."

As he said this, he took from his pouch a tuft of raw cotton. With this he rubbed the blood lightly from the blade. He then drew forth a small stone phial; and, pouring a few drops of liquid upon the metal, watched the result.

I waited with no slight feeling of uneasiness. Seguin, too, appeared anxious; and as I knew that he must have witnessed oftentimes the effect of a poisoned arrow, I did not feel very comfortable, seeing him watch the assaying process with so much apparent anxiety. I knew there was danger, where he dreaded it.

"M. Haller," said El Sol, at length, "you are in luck this time. I think I may call it luck, for your antagonist has surely something else in his quiver not quite so harmless as this."

"Let me see," he added, and, stepping up to the Navajo, drew another arrow from the quiver that still remained slung upon the Indian's back. After subjecting the blade to a similar test, he exclaimed:—

"I told you so! look at this! green as a plantain! He fired two—where is the other? Comrades, help me to find it. Such a tell-tale as that must not be left behind us."

Several of the men leaped from their horses, and searched for the shaft that had been shot first. I pointed out the direction and probable distance, as near as I could; and in a few moments it was picked up.

El Sol took it, and poured a few drops of his liquid on the blade. It turned green like the other!

"You may thank your saints, M. Haller," said the Coco, "it was not this one made that hole in your arm, else would it have taken all the skill of Doctor Reichter and myself to have saved you. But what's this? Another wound! Ha! he touched you as he made his right point. Let me look at it."

"I think it is only a scratch."

"This is a strange climate, M. Haller. I have seen such scratches become mortal wounds when not sufficiently valued. Luna! some cotton, sis! I shall endeavour to dress yours, so that you need not fear that result. You deserve that much at my hands. But for *you*, sir, *he* would have escaped me."

"But for *you*, sir, *he* would have killed me."

"Well," replied the Coco, with a smile, "it is possible you would not have come off so well. Your weapon played you false.

It is hardly just to expect a man to parry a lance-point with a clubbed rifle; though it was beautifully done. I do not wonder that you pulled trigger in the second joust. I intended doing so myself, had the lasso failed me again. But we were in luck both ways. You must sling this arm for a day or two. Luna, that scarf of yours!"

"No!" said I, as the girl proceeded to unfasten a beautiful scarf which she wore around her waist, "you shall not—I will find something else."

"Here, mister, if this will do," interposed the young trapper, Garey, "you are heartily welcome till it."

As Garey said this, he pulled a coloured handkerchief out of the breast of his hunting shirt, and held it forth.

"You are very kind—thank you!" I replied, although, I knew on whose account the kerchief was given; "you will be pleased to accept this in return?" and I offered him

one of my small revolvers—a weapon that, at that time and in that place, was worth its weight in pearls.

The mountain man knew this, and very gracefully accepted the proffered gift; but, much as he might have prized it, I saw that he was still more gratified with a simple smile that he received from another quarter; and I felt certain that the scarf would soon change owners, at any rate.

I watched the countenance of El Sol, to see if he had noticed or approved of this little bye-play. I could perceive no unusual emotion upon it. He was busy with my wounds; which he dressed, in a manner that would have done credit to a Member of the R. C. S.

"Now!" said he, when he had finished, "you will be ready for as much more fighting in a couple of days, at the farthest. You have a bad bridle-arm, M. Haller, but the best horse I ever saw. I do not wonder at your refusing to sell him."

Most of the conversation had been carried on in English; and it was spoken by the Coco chief with an accent and emphasis, to my ear, as good as I had ever heard. He spoke French too, like a Parisian; and it was in this language that he usually conversed with Seguin. I wondered at all this.

The men had re-mounted with the intention of returning to the camp. Extreme hunger was now prompting us; and we commenced riding back to partake of the repast so unceremoniously interrupted.

At a short distance from the camp we dismounted; and, picketing our horses upon the grass, walked forward to search for the stray steaks and ribs, we had lately seen in plenty. A new chagrin awaited us. Not a morsel of flesh remained! The Coyotes had taken advantage of our absence, and we could see nothing around us but

naked bones! The thighs and ribs of the buffaloes had been polished, as if scraped with a knife. Even the hideous carcase of the digger had become a shining skeleton!

"Wagh!" exclaimed one of the hunters, "wolf now or nothing—Hyar goes!" And the man levelled his rifle.

"Hold!" exclaimed Seguin, seeing the act. "Are you mad, sir?"

"I reckon not, Capt'n," replied the hunter, doggedly bringing down his piece. "We must eat, I s'pose. I see nothin' but them about; an how are we goin' to get them, 'ithout shootin'?"

Seguin made no reply, except by pointing to the bow, which El Sol was making ready.

"Eh-ho!" added the hunter, "yer right Captain. I asks pardon. I had forgot that piece o' bone."

The Coco took an arrow from the quiver, and tried the head with his assaying liquid. It proved to be a hunting shaft; and, ad-

justing it to the string, he sent it through the body of a white wolf, killing it instantly. He took up the shaft again; and, wiping the feather, shot another, and another, until the bodies of five or six of these animals lay stretched upon the ground.

"Kill a *coyote* when ye're about it," shouted one of the hunters, "gentlemen, like we, oughter have leastwise two courses to our dinner."

The men laughed at this rough sally; and El Sol smiling, again picked up the arrow, and sent it whizzing through the body of one of the coyotés.

"I think that will be enough—for one meal at all events," said El Sol, recovering the arrow, and putting it back into the quiver.

"Aye!" replied the wit, "if we wants more, we kin go back to the larder agin. It's a kind o' meat that eats better fresh anyhow."

"Well, it diz hoss. Wagh! I'm in for a griskin o' the white. Hyar goes."

The hunters, laughing at the humour of their comrades, drew their shining knives, and set about skinning the wolves. The adroitness with which this operation was performed, showed that it was by no means new to them.

In a short time, the animals were stripped of their hides and quarters; and each man, taking his quarter, commenced roasting it over the fire.

"Fellers! What d'ye call this anyhow? Beef or mutton?" asked one, as they began to eat.

"Wolf mutton, I reckin'?" was the reply.

"It's dog-gone good eatin' I say—peels off as tender as squll."

"It's some'at like goat, aint it?"

"Mine tastes more like dog to me."

"It aint bad at all—better than poor bull any day."

"I'd like it a heap better, if I war sure the thing had'nt been up to yon varmint on the rocks." And the man pointed to the skeleton of the digger!

The idea was horrible; and under other circumstances, would have acted as a sufficient emetic.

"Wagh!" exclaimed a hunter, "ye've most taken away my stammuck. I was agoin to try the coyoat afore ye spoke. I won't now, for I seed *them* smellin' about him afore we rid off."

"I say, old case, you don't mind it, do ye?"

This was addressed to Rube, who was busy on his rib, and made no reply.

"He? not he," said another, answering for him, "Rube's eat a heap o' queery tit-bits in his time. Haint ye, Rube?"

"Aye, an' afore yur be as long in the mountains as this child, ee'll be glad to get yur teeth over wuss chawins than wolf-meat —see if 'ee dont."

"Man meat, I reckin'?"

"Aye—that's what Rube means."

"Boyees!" said Rube, not heeding the remark, and apparently in good humour, now that he was satisfying his appetite. "What's the nassiest thing leavin' out man-meat—any o' 'ees ever chawed?"

"Woman-meat, I reckin'."

"'Ee chuckle-headed fool! you need'nt be so peert now—showin' yur smartness when 'taint called for, no-how."

"Wal, leavin' out man-meat, as you say," remarked one of the hunters, in answer to Rube's question, "a muss-rat's the meanest thing I ever set teeth on."

"I've chawed sage hare—raw at that—" said a second, "an' I don't want to eat anything that's bitterer."

"Owl 's no great eatin'," added a third.

"I've ate skunk," continued a fourth; "an' I've ate sweeter meat in my time."

"*Carajo*," exclaimed a Mexican, "what

do you think of monkey? I have dined upon that down south many's the time."

"Wal; I guess monkey's but tough chawins; but I've sharped my teeth on dry buffler hide, and it wa'nt as tender as it mout a been."

"This child," said Rube, after the rest had given in their experience, "leavin' monkey to the beside—hav eat all them critters as has been named yet. Monkey he haint, bein as thur's none o' 'em in these parts. It may be tough, or it may'nt—it may be bitter, an' it mayn't, for what I knows to the contrairywise; but, oncest on a time, this niggur chawed a varmint that wa'nt much sweeter, if it wur as sweet."

"What was it, Rube?" what was it?" asked several in a breath, curious to know what the old trapper could have eaten, more unpalatable than the viands already named.

"'Twur turkey-buzzart then—that's what *it* wur."

"Turkey-buzzard!" echoed every one.

"'T wa'nt anythin' else."

"Wagh! that was a stinkin' pill, an' no mistake."

"That beats me all hollow."

"And when did ye eat the buzzard, old boy?" asked one, suspecting that there might be a "story" connected with this feat of the earless trapper.

"Ay! tell us that, Rube; tell us!" cried several.

"Wal," commenced Rube, after a moment's silence, "'Twur about six yeern ago, I wur set afoot on the Arkansas—by the Rapahoes—leastwise two hunder mile below the Big Timmer. The cussed skunks tuk hoss, beaver, an all. He—he!" continued the speaker, with a chuckle, "he-he! they mout a did as well an let ole Rube alone."

"I reckon that, too," remarked a hunter. "'Taint like they made much out o' that speckelashun. Well—about the buzzard?"

"'Ee see, I wur cleaned out; and left with jest a pair o' leggins—better than two hunderd miles from anywhur. Bent's wur the nearest; and I tuk up the river in that direkshun.

I never seed varmint o' all kinds as shy. They wudn't a-been, d—n 'em! if I'd a had my traps; but there wa'n't a critter —from the minners in the water to the bufflers on the perairer—that didn't look like they knowed how this niggur wur fixed. I kud git nuthin' for two days but lizard, and scace at that."

"Lizard's but poor eatin," remarked one.

"'Ee may say that. This hyur thigh cint 's fat cow to it—*it* are."

And Rube, as he said this, made a fresh attack upon the "wolf-mutton."

"I chawed up the ole leggins, till I wur as naked as Chimley Rock."

"Gollies! was it winter?"

"No. 'Twur calf-time, and warm enuf for that matter. I didn't mind the want

o' the buckskin thataway, but I kud a eat more o' it.

The third day I struck a town o' sand-rats. This niggur's har wur longer then than it are now. I made snares o' it, and trapped a wheen o' the rats; but *they* grew shy too, d—n 'em! and I had to quit that speck'-lashun. This wur the third day from the time I'd been set down; and I wur getting nasty weak on it. I gin to think that the time wur come for this child to go under.

'Twur a leettle arter sun-up, and I wur sittin on the bank, when I seed somethin' queery floatin down the river. When it kim closter, I seed it wur the karkidge o' a buffler—calf at that—an a couple o' buzzarts flappin about on the thing, pickin its peepers out. 'Twur far out, and the water deep; but I'd made up my mind to fetch it ashore. I wa'n't long in strippin, I reckin."

Here the hunters interrupted Rube's story with a laugh.

"I tuk the water, and swum out. I kud smell the thing afore I wur half way; and when I got near it, the birds mizzled. I wur soon clost up, and seed, at a glimp, that the calf wur as rotten as punk."

"What a pity!" exclaimed one of the hunters.

"I wa'n't a gwine to have my swim for nuthin; so I tuk the tail in my teeth, and swum back for the shore. I hadn't made three strokes till the tail pulled out!

"I then swum round ahint the karkidge, and pushed it afore me, till I got it landed, high and dry upon a sand bar. 'Twur like to fall to pieces, when I pulled it out o' the water. 'Twa'nt eatable no how!"

Here Rube took a fresh mouthful of the wolf-mutton, and remained silent, until he had masticated it. The men had become interested in the story, and waited with impatience. At length he proceeded—

"I seed the buzzarts still flying about, an

fresh ones a comin. I tuk a idee that I mout git my claws upon some o' 'em. So I lay down clost up agin the calf, and played possum."

"I wa'nt long that-away when the birds begun to light on the sand bar, an' a big cock kim floppin up to the karkidge. Afore he kud flop off agin, I grupped him by the legs."

"Hooraw! well done, by Gollies!"

"The cussed thing wur nearly as stinkin' as t'other, but it wur die dog—buzzart or calf—so I skinned the buzzart."

"And ate it?" inquired an impatient listener.

"No-o," slowly drawled Rube, apparently "miffed" at being thus interrupted. "It ate *me*."

The laugh that followed this retort restored the old trapper to good humour again.

"Did you go it raw, Rube?" asked one of the hunters.

"How could he do otherwise? He hadn't a spark o' fire, an' nothing to make one out of,"

"'Ee d—d fool!" exclaimed Rube, turning savagely on the last speaker. "I kud make a fire if thur wa'nt a spark nearer than h—ll!"

A wild yell of laughter followed this dreadful speech; and it was some minutes before the trapper recovered his temper sufficiently to resume his narration.

"The rest o' the birds," continued he at length "seein' the ole cock rubbed out, grew shy, and kep away on t'other side o' the river. 'Twa'nt no use tryin' that dodge over agin. Jest then I spied a coyoat comin' lopin down the bank, and another follerin upon his heels, and two or three more on the same trail. I know'd it wud be no joke gruppin one o' them by the leg; but I made up my mind to try it; an' I lay down est as afore, clost up to the calf. 'Twur no

go. The cunnin' things seed the float stick, an' kep clur o' the karkidge. I wur a-gwine to caché under some brush that wur by, an' I begun to carry it up, when alle v a suddint I tuk a fresh idee in my head. I seed thur wur drift-wood a plenty on the bank; so I fotched it up, an' built a pen-trap roun' about the calf. In the twinklin' o' a goat's eye, I had six varmints in the trap.

"Hooraw! Ye war safe then, old hos."

"I tuk a wheen o' stones, and then clomb up on the pen, an' killed the hul kit on' em. Lord, boyees! 'ee never seed sich a snappin and snarlin an' jumpin an' yowltin, as when I peppered them donicks down on 'em. He! he! he! ho! ho! hoo!"

And the smoky old sinner chuckled with delight at the remembrance of his adventure.

"You reached Bent's then safe enough, I reckin?"

"'Ee—es. I skinned the critters wi' a sharp stone, an' made me a sort o' shirt an' leggins. This niggur had no mind, comin' in naked, to gi' them thur joke at the Fort. I packed enough o' the wolf meat to last me up, an' I got thur in less'n a week."

"Bill wur thur himself; an' ee all know Bill Bent. *He* knowd *me*. I wa'nt in the fort a half an hour till I wur spick-span in new buckskins, wi' a new rifle; an' that rifle wur Targuts, now afore ye."

"Ha! you got Tearguts thar then?"

"I got Targuts thur then, an a gun she are. He! he! he! 'Twa'nt long arter I got her, till I tried her. He! he! he! ho! ho! hoo!"

And the old trapper went off into another fit of chuckling.

"What are ye laughin' at now, Rube? asked one of his comrades.

"He! he! he! What am I larfin at! He! he! he! ho! ho! That are the crisp

o' the joke. He! he! he! What am I larfin at?"

"Yes, tell us, man!"

"It are this then, I'm a larfin at," replied Rube, sobering down a little. "I wa'nt at Bent's three days, when who do'ee think shed kum to the Fort?"

"Who? Maybe the Rapahoes?"

"Them same Injuns; an the very niggurs as set me afoot. They kum to the Fort to trade with Bill, and thur I sees both my ole mar an rifle!"

"You got them back then?"

"That wur likely. Thur wur a wheen o' mountain men thur at the time, that wa'nt the fellers to see this child put down on the perairer for nuthin. Yander 's the critter!" and Rube pointed to the old mare. "The rifle I gin to Bill, an kep Targuts instead—seein she wur a better gun."

"So you got square with the Rapahoes?"

"That jest rests on what 'ee 'ud call squar. Do 'ee see these hyur nicks—them standing sep'rate?"

And the trapper pointed to a row of small notches cut in the stock of his rifle.

"Aye, aye!" cried several men in reply.

"Thur's five o' 'em, aint thur?"

"One—two—three—yes, five."

"*Them's Rapahoes!*"

Rube's story was ended.

CHAPTER VIII

BLINDING THE PURSUER—A TRAPPER'S RUSE.

By this time, the men had finished eating, and now began to gather around Seguin, for the purpose of deliberating on what course we should pursue. One had already been sent up to the rocks, to act as a vidette, and warn us, in case any of the Indians should be descried upon the prairie.

We all felt that we were still in a dilemma. The Navajo was our captive, and his men would come to seek for him. He was too important a personage—second chief of the nation to be abandoned without a search; and his own followers—nearly half of the

tribe—would certainly be back to the spring. Not finding him there, should they not discover our tracks, they would return upon the war trail, to their country.

This, we all saw, would render our expedition impracticable, as Dacoma's band alone outnumbered us; and should we meet them in their mountain fastnesses, we could have no chance of escape.

For some time, Seguin remained silent, with his eyes fixed on the ground. He was evidently tracing out in his mind some plan of action. None of the hunters chose to interrupt him.

"Comrades!" said he at length, "this is an unfortunate *coup*, but it could not be avoided. It is well it is no worse. As it is, we must alter our plans. They will be sure to return on his track, and follow their own trail back to the Navajo towns. What then? Our band cannot either come on to the Piñon, or cross the war-trail at any

point. They would discover our tracks to a certainty."

"Why can't we go straight up to what the rest's cached, and then take round by the old mine? That won't interfere with the war-trail no how."

This was proposed by one of the hunters.

'Vaya!" rejoined a Mexican, "we should meet the Navajoes just when we had got to their town! Carrai! that would never do, amigo. There wouldn't many of us get back again! Santissima! No."

"We aint obleeged to meet them," argued the first speaker. "They're not a goin' to stop at thar town when they find the nigger haint been back."

"It is true," said Seguin; "they will not remain there. They will doubtless return on the war-trail again; but I know the country by the mine."

"So do I—so do I," cried several voices.

"There is no game," continued Seguin.

"We have no provisions; it is therefore impossible for us to go that way."

"We couldn't go it, no how."

"We should starve before we had got through the Mimbres."

"Thar's no water that way."

"No, by Gosh! Not enough to make a drink for a sand rat."

"We must take our chances, then;" said Seguin.

Here he paused thoughtfully, and with a gloomy expression of countenance.

"We must cross the trail," he continued, "and go by the Prieto, or—abandon the expedition."

The word "Prieto," in opposition to the phrase, "abandon the expedition," put the hunters to their wit's end for invention; and plan after plan was proposed,—all however ending in the probability—in fact certainty—that if adopted, our trail would be discovered by the enemy, and followed up before

we could escape back to the Del Norté. They were, therefore, one after another rejected.

During all this discussion, old Rube had not said a word. The earless trapper was sitting upon the prairie—squat on his hams —tracing out some lines with his bowie; and apparently laying out the plan of a fortification!

"What are ye doin' old hoss?" inquired one of his comrades.

"My hearin aint as good as 'twur, afore I kim into this cussd country; but I thought I heerd some o' ees say jest now, we cudn't cross the Pash trail 'ithout bein follered in two days. That's a dod-rotted lie! *It* are."

"How are ye goin' to prove it hoss?"

"Chut, man! yur tongue wags like a beaver's tail in flood time."

"Can you suggest any way that it can be done, Rube? I confess I see none."

As Seguin made this appeal, all eyes were turned upon the trapper.

"Why, Cap; I kin surgest my own notion o' the thing. It may be right, and it mayn't be right, but if it wur follered out, thur'll be neither Pash nor Navagh that'll smell where we go for a week. If they diz, 'ee may cut my ears off."

This was a favourite joke with Rube, and the hunters only laughed, Seguin himself could not restrain a smile; as he requested the speaker to proceed.

"Fust and foremost then," said Rube, "Thur not a-gwine to come arter that niggur in less than two days."

"How can you tell that?"

"This way. "'Ee see he's only second chief, an they kin go on well enough 'ithout him. But that ain't it. The Injun forgot his bow—white at that. Now 'ee all knows as well as this child, that that's a big disgrace in the eyes o' Injuns."

"You're right about that, hoss," remarked one.

"Wal—so the ole coon thinks. Now, 'ee see, its as plain as Pike's peak, that he kim away back 'ithout tellin' any o' the rest a syllabub about it. He'd not let 'em know ev he kud help it."

"That is not improbable," said Seguin. "Proceed, Rube!"

"More 'n that," continued the trapper, "I'll stake high, thet he ordered them not to foller him; afeerd thet some on 'em mout see what he kim for. If he'd a thought they knew or suspected, he'd a sent some other, and not kum himself; that's what *he'd* a done."

This was all probable enough; and with the knowledge which the scalp-hunters possessed of the Navajo character, they one and all believed it to be so.

"I'm sartint they'll kum back," continued Rube, "that are, his half o' the tribe, anyways; but it'll be three days clur, an' well up till another, afore they drinks Peenyun water."

"But they would strike our trail the day after."

"If we wur green fools enough to let 'em, they wud."

"How can we prevent that?" asked Seguin.

"Easy as fallin' off a log."

"How? how?" inquired several at once.

"By puttin' them on another scent, do 'ee see?"

"Yes! but in what way can we effect that?" inquired Seguin.

"Why, Cap., yur tumble has surely dumbfoundered ye. I wud think less o' these other dummies not sein' at a glimp how we kin do it."

"I confess, Rube," replied Seguin with a smile, "I do not perceive how we can mislead them."

"Wal, then," continued the trapper, with a chuckle of satisfaction at his own superior prairie-craft, "this child's a-gwine to tell

'ee how 'ee kin put them on a track that'll jest carry them hellwards."

"Hooraw for you, old hoss!"

"'Ee see a quiver on that Injun's back?"

"Aye! aye!" cried several voices.

"It's full o' arrows, or pretty near it, I reckin'."

"It is—Well?"

"Wal, then, let some o' us ride the Injun's mustang—any other critter thet's got the same track 'll do—away down the Pash trail, and stick them things pointin' south'art; an' if the Navagh don't travel that-away till they comes up with the Pashes, 'ee may have this child's har for a plug o' the wust Kaintucky terbaccer."

"That'll fool them!"

"Viva!" "He's right—he's right!" "Hooraw for old Rube!" and various similar exclamations were uttered by the hunters.

"Taint needcessary for them to know why *he* shud a tuk that track. They'll know his arrows; that's enuf. By the

time they git's back, wi' thur fingers in thur meat-traps, we'll hev start enough to carry us from h—— to Hackensack."

"Ay, that we will by Gollies!"

"The band," continued Rube, "needn't come to the Peenyun spring no howsomever. They kin cross the war-trail higher up to'rst the Heely, and meet us on t'other side o' the mountain, whur thur's a grist o' game—both cattle an' buffler. A plenty o' both on the ole mission lands, I'll be boun'. We'd hev to go thur anyways. Thur's no hopes o' meetin' the buffler this side, arter the splurry them Injuns has gin 'em."

"That is true enough," said Seguin. "We must go round the mountain before we can expect to fall in with the buffalo. The Indian hunt has chased them clear off the Llanos. Come then! Let us set about our work at once. We have yet two hours before sunset. What would you do first, Rube? you have given the plan—I will trust to you for the details."

"Why in my opeenyun, Cap, the fust thing to be did, are to send a man as straight as he can gallip to whur the bands cachéd. Let him fotch them acrost the trail."

"Where should they cross, do you think?"

"About twenty mile north o' hyur thur's a dry ridge, an' a good grist o loose donicks. If they cross, as they oughter, they needn't make much sign. I kud take a train o' Bent's wagons over, that 'ud puzzle deaf Smith to foller them. *I* kud."

"I will send a man off instantly. Here, Sanchez! you have a good horse, and know the ground. It is not over twenty miles to where they are cachéd. Bring them along the ridge, and with caution as you have heard. You will find us round the north point of the mountain. You can travel all night, and be up with us early in the morning. Away!"

The torero, without making any answer, drew his horse from the picket, leaped into the saddle, and rode off at a gallop towards the north-west.

"It is fortunate," said Seguin, looking after him for some moments, "that they have trampled the ground about here, else the tracks made in our late encounter would certainly have told tales upon us."

"Thur's no danger about that," rejoined Rube; "but when we rides from hyur, Cap'n, we mustn't foller *their* trail. They'd soon sight our back tracks. "We had best keep up yander among the loose donicks." Rube pointed to the shingle that stretched north and south along the foot of the mountain.

"Yes, that shall be our course. We can leave this without making any tracks. What next?"

"The next idee are, to get rid of yon piece o' machin'ry," and the trapper, as he

spoke, nodded in the direction of the skeleton."

"True! I had forgotten it. What shall we do with it?"

"Bury it," advised one.

"Wagh! no. Burn it!" cried another.

"Aye, that's best," said a third.

The last suggestion was adopted.

The skeleton was brought down—the stains of the blood were carefully rubbed from the rocks—the skull was shivered with a tomahawk—and the joints were broken in pieces. The whole mass was then flung upon the fire, and pounded down among numerous bones of the buffalo, already simmering in the cinders. An anatomist only could have detected the presence of a human skeleton!

"Now, Rube; the arrows?"

"If 'ee'll leave that to me an' Bill Garey, I think them two niggurs kin fix 'em so as to bamfoozle any Injuns thur is in these parts.

We'll hav to go four mile or tharabout; but we'll git back by the time 'ee have filled yur gourds, an' got yur traps ready for skeetin."

"Very well! take the arrows."

"Four's gobs for us!" said Rube, taking that number from the quiver. "Keep the rest. 'Ee'll want more wolf-meat afore we start. Thur's not a tail o' anythin' else till we git clur roun' the mountain yander. Billee! throw your ugly props over that Narvágh mustang. Putty hoss too; but I wudn't giv my old mar for a hul cavayard o' him. Gi's a sprig o' the black feather."

Here the old trapper drew one of the ostrich feathers out of the helmet of the Navajo chief, and continued—

"Boyees! take care o' the ole mar till I kum back, an dont let her stampede do'ee hear? I wants a blanket. Don't all speak at oncest!"

"Here, Rube, here!" cried several, holding out their blankets.

"E'er a one 'll do. We needs three. Bill's and mine and another'n. Hyur, Billee! take these afore ye. Now ride down the Pash trail three hundred yards, or thar-about, an then pull up. Dont take the beaten pad, but keep alongside, an make big tracks. Gallop d—n ye!"

The young hunter laid his quirt to the flanks of the mustang, and started at full gallop along the Apaché trail.

When he had ridden a distance of three hundred yards, or so, he halted to wait for further directions from his comrade.

Old Rube, at the same time, took an arrow; and, fastening a piece of ostrich feather to the barb, adjusted it on one of the upright poles which the Indians had left standing on the camp ground. It was placed in such a manner, that the head pointed southward in the direction of the Apaché trail; and was so conspicuous with the black feather, that no one coming in from the Llanos could fail to see it.

This done, the old trapper followed his companion on foot, keeping wide out from the trail, and making his tracks with great caution. On coming up with Garey, he stuck a second arrow in the ground—its point also inclined to the south, and so that it could be seen from the former one.

Garey then galloped forward—*keeping on the trail*—while Rube struck out again to the open prairie, and advanced in a line parallel to it.

Having ridden a distance of two or three miles, Garey slackened his pace, and put the mustang to a slow walk. A mile farther on he again halted, and held his horse at rest, *in the beaten path!*

Rube now came up, and spread the three blankets lengthways along the ground, and leading westward from the trail. Garey dismounted; and led the animal gently on the blankets.

As its feet rested on two at a time, each,

as it became the rearmost, was taken up, and spread again in front; and this was repeated, until they had got the mustang some fifty lengths of himself out into the prairie. The movement was executed with an adroitness equal to that which characterized the feat of Sir Walter Raleigh.

Garey now took up the blankets, and remounting commenced riding slowly back by the foot of the mountain; while Rube returned to the trail, and placed a third arrow at the point where the mustang had parted from it. He then proceeded south as before. One more was yet needed to make doubly sure.

When he had gone about half a-mile, we saw him stoop over the trail—rise up again —cross toward the mountain foot, and follow the path taken by his companion. The work was done; the fingerposts were set; the *ruse* was complete!

El Sol, meanwhile, had been busy. Several wolves were killed and skinned; and

the meat packed in their skins. The gourds were filled; our captive tied on a mule; and we stood waiting the return of the trappers.

Seguin had resolved to leave two men at the spring as videttes. They were to keep their horses by the rocks, and supply them with the mule-bucket—so as to make no fresh tracks at the water. One was to remain constantly on an eminence, and watch the prairie with the glass. They could thus descry the returning Navajoes, in time themselves to escape unobserved along the foot of the mountain. They were then to halt at a place ten miles to the north, where they could still have a view of the plain. There they were to remain, until they had ascertained what direction the Indians should take after leaving the spring; when they were to hurry forward and join the band with their tidings.

All these arrangements having been com-

pleted, as Rube and Garey came up, we mounted our horses; and rode by a circuitous route for the mountain foot. When close in, we found the path strewed with loose cut-rock—upon which the hoofs of our animals left no track. Over this, we rode forward—heading to the north, and keeping in a line nearly parallel to the "war trail."

CHAPTER IX.

A BUFFALO "SURROND."

A MARCH of twenty miles brought us to the place where we expected to be joined by the band. We found a small stream heading in the Piñon range, and running westward to the San Pedro. It was fringed with cotton-trees and willows, and with grass in abundance for our horses. Here we camped, kindled a fire in the thicket, cooked our wolf mutton, ate it, and went to sleep.

The band came up in the morning, having travelled all night. Their provisions were spent as well as ours; and, instead of resting our wearied animals, we pushed on through a pass in the Sierra, in hopes of finding game on the other side.

About noon we debouched through the

mountain pass into a country of "openings" —small prairies, bounded by jungly forests, and interspersed with timber "islands." These prairies were covered with tall grass, and buffalo "sign" appeared as we rode into them. We saw their "roads," "chips," and "wallows."

We saw, moreover, the "bois de vache" of the wild cattle. We would soon meet with one or the other.

We were still on the stream—by which we had camped the night before—and we made a "noon halt," to refresh our animals.

The hirsute forms of the cacti were around us, bearing red and yellow fruit in abundance. We plucked the pears of the pitahaya, and ate them greedily; we found service berries, yampa, and roots of the *pomme blanche*. We dined on fruits and vegetables of various sorts, indigenous only to this wild region.

But the stomachs of the hunters longed

for their favorite food—the "hump ribs," and "boudins," of the buffalo—and after a halt of two hours, we moved forward through the openings.

We had ridden about an hour among *chapparal*, when Rube—who was some paces in advance, acting as guide—turned in his saddle, and pointed downward.

"What's there Rube?" demanded Seguin, in a low voice.

"Fresh track, Cap'n—buffler."

"What number, can you guess?"

"A gang o' fifty or tharabout. They've tuk through the thicket yander-away. I kin sight the sky. Thur's clur ground not fur from us; an I'd stake a plew thur in it. I think it's a small perairer, Cap."

"Halt here, men!" said Seguin; "halt and keep silent. Ride forward, Rube. Come, M. Haller, you're fond of hunting—come along with us!"

I followed the guide and Seguin through

the bushes—like them riding slowly and silently.

In a few minutes, we reached the edge of a prairie covered with long grass. Peering cautiously through the leaves of the prosopis, we had a full view of the open ground. The buffaloes were on the plain!

It was, as Rube had rightly conjectured, a small prairie, about a mile and a-half in width,—closed in on all sides by a thick chapparal. Near the centre was a "motte" of heavy timber, growing up from a leafy underwood. A spur of willows running out from the timber, indicated the presence of water.

"Thur's a spring yander;" muttered Rube. "They've jest been a coolin thur noses at it."

This was evident enough—for some of the animals were, at the moment, walking out of the willows; and we could see the wet clay upon their flanks, and the saliva glancing down from their jaws.

"How will we get at them, Rube," asked Seguin; "can we approach them do you think?"

"I doubt not, Cap. The grass 'ud hardly kiver us; an thur a-gwine out o' range o' the bushes."

"How then? We cannot run them,—there's not room. They would be into the thicket at the first dash. We would lose every hoof of them."

"Sartin as Scripter."

"What is to be done?"

"This niggur sees but one other plan as kin be used jest at this time."

"What is it?"

"Surround."

"Right—if we can do that. How is the wind?"

"Dead as an Injun wi' his head cut off," replied the trapper; taking a small feather out of his cap and tossing it in the air. "See Cap, it falls plum!"

"It does truly."

"We kin easy git roun' them bufflers afore they wind us; and we hev men enough to make a picket fence about them. We kin hardly set about it too soon, Cap. Thur a movin' torst the edge yander."

"Let us divide the men then," said Seguin, turning his horse, "you can guide one half of them to their stands. I will go with the other. M. Haller, you had better remain where you are. It is as good a stand as you can get. Have patience. It may be an hour before all are placed. When you hear the bugle, you may gallop forward and do your best. If we succeed, you will have sport and a good supper—what, I suppose, you feel the need of by this time."

So saying, Seguin left me, and rode back to the men, followed by old Rube.

It was their purpose to separate the band into two parties—each taking opposite direc-

tions—and drop a man, here and there, at regular intervals around the prairie. They would keep in the thicket while on the march; and only discover themselves at a given signal. In this way—should the buffaloes allow time for the execution of the movement—we would be almost certain of securing the whole gang.

As soon as Seguin had left me, I looked to my rifle and pistols, putting on a set of fresh caps. After that, having nothing else to occupy me, I remained seated in my saddle—eyeing the animals, as they fed unconscious of danger. I was full of anxiety lest some clumsy fellow might discover himself too soon; and thus spoil our anticipated sport.

After a while I could see the birds flying up from the thicket; and the screaming of the blue jay indicated to me the progress of the "surround."

Now and then, an old bull, on the skirts

of the herd, would toss up his shaggy mane —snuff the wind—and strike the ground fiercely with his hoof—evidently labouring under a suspicion, that all was not right!

The others did not seem to heed these demonstrations; but kept on quietly cropping the luxuriant grama.

I was thinking how nicely we were going to have them in the trap, when an object caught my eye, just emerging from the motte. It was a buffalo calf; and I saw that it was proceeding to join the gang. I thought it somewhat strange that it should be separated from the rest, for the calves—trained by their mothers to know the wolf—usually keep up with the herd.

"It has stayed behind at the spring," thought I. "Perhaps the others pushed it from the water; and it could not drink until they had gone."

I fancied that it moved clumsily—as if it were wounded—but it was passing

through the long grass; and I could not get a good view of it.

There was a pack of coyotés—there always is—sneaking after the herd. These, perceiving the calf as it came out of the timber, made an instant and simultaneous attack upon it. I could see them skipping around it; and fancied I could hear their fierce snarling. But the calf appeared to fight its way through the thick of them; and, after a short while, I saw it close in to its companions, where I lost sight of it among the others.

"A game young bull!" soliloquized I, and again I ran my eye around the skirting of the chapparal to watch how the hunters were getting forward with the "surround." I could perceive the flashing of brilliant wings over the bramble; and hear the shrill voices of the jay-birds. Judging by these, I concluded that the men were moving slowly enough. It was half-an-hour since

Seguin had left me, and I could perceive that they were not half way round as yet.

I began to make calculations as to how long I would have to wait, soliloquizing as follows:—

"Diameter of the prairie—a mile and a half. It is a circle. Three times that? Four miles and a half. Phew! I will not hear the signal in much less than an hour. I must be patient then and—What! The brutes are lying down! Good! There is no danger now of their making off. We will have rare sport! One—two—three—six of them down! It must be the heat, and the water. They have drunk too much—there goes another!—and filled their bellies too full of the rich grama. Lucky devils! They have nothing else to do but eat, while I—No. 8 down—well! I hope to eat soon too. What an odd way they have of coming to the ground! How different from anything of the bovine tribe, I have yet observed! I have

never seen buffaloes "quieting" down before; and it is not a very quiet plan they take. One would think that they were falling—as if shot! Two more alongside the rest! They will soon be all upon the turf. So much the better. We will gallop up, before they can get to their feet again. Oh! that I could hear that horn!"

And thus I went on rambling from thought to thought, and listening for the signal—although I knew that it could not be given for some time yet.

The buffaloes kept moving slowly onward, browsing as they went, and continuing to lie down one after another. I thought it strange—their stretching themselves thus successively; but I had observed farm cattle do the same; and I was at that time but little acquainted with the habits of the buffalo. Some of them appeared to toss about on the ground, and kick violently! I had heard of a peculiarity of these animals,

termed "wallowing." "They are at it," thought I. I wished much to have a clearer view of this curious exercise, but the high grass prevented me. I could only see their shaggy shoulders, and occasionally their hoofs kicking up over the sward.

I watched their movements with great interest—now feeling secure that the "surround" would be complete, before they would think of rising.

At length the last one of the gang followed the example of his companions, and dropped over.

They were now all upon their sides—half buried in the bunch grass. I thought I noticed the calf still upon its feet; but, at that moment, the bugle sounded; and a simultaneous cheer broke from all sides of the prairie.

I pressed the spur to my horse's flank, and dashed out into the open plain. Fifty others had done the same—yelling as they shot out of the thicket!

With my reins resting on my left fingers, and my rifle thrown crosswise, I galloped forward, filled with the wild excitement that such an adventure imparts. I was cocked and ready—resolved upon having the first shot.

It was but a short distance, from where I had started, to the nearest buffalo. I was soon within range—my horse flying like an arrow.

"Are the animals asleep! I am within ten paces of him, and still he stirs not! I will fire at him as he lies."

I raised my rifle, levelled it, and was about to pull trigger, when something red gleamed before my eyes. It was blood!

I lowered the piece with a feeling of terror; and commenced dragging upon the rein; but, before I could pull up, I was carried into the midst of the prostrate herd. Here my horse suddenly stopped; and I sat in my saddle as if spell bound. I was under the influence of a superstitious awe. Blood was before me, and around me! Turn

which way I would, my eye rested upon blood!

My comrades closed in—yelling as they came—but their yelling suddenly ceased; and one by one reined up, as I had done, with looks of consternation and wonder!

It was not strange—at such a sight. Before us lay the bodies of the buffaloes. They were all dead, or quivering in the last throes! Each had a wound above the brisket, and from this the red stream gurgled out, and trickled down their still panting sides! Blood welled from their mouths, and out of their nostrils. Pools of it were filtering through the prairie turf; and clotted gouts—flung out by the struggling hoof—sprinkled the grass around them!

O God! What could it mean?

"Wagh!" "Santissima!" Sacre Dieu!" were the exclamations of the hunters.

"Surely no mortal hand has done this?"

"It wa'n't nuthin' else," cried a well-known voice, "ev yur call an Injun a mortal. 'Twur a rid skin, and this child—Lookee-e!"

I heard the click of a rifle along with this abrupt exclamation. I turned suddenly. Rube was in the act of levelling his piece. My eye involuntarily followed the direction of the barrel. There was an object moving in the grass!

"A buffalo that still kicks," thought I, as I saw the mass of dark brown hair, "he is going to finish him—it is the calf!"

I had scarcely made the observation, when the animal reared up on its hind legs, uttering a wild human scream—the shaggy hide was flung off—and a naked savage appeared, holding out his arms in an attitude of supplication!

I could not have saved him. The rifle had cracked. The ball had sped. I saw it piercing his brown breast, as a drop of

sleet strikes upon the pane of glass; the red spout gushed forth; and the victim fell forward upon the body of one of the animals!

"Wagh! Rube," exclaimed one of the men, "why didn't ye give him time to skin the meat. He mout as well a done that when he war about it;" and the man laughed at his savage jest.

"Lookee hyur, boyees!" said Rube, pointing to the motte, "if 'ee look sharp, yur mout scare up another calf yander-away! I'm a gwine to see arter this Injun's har, *I* am."

The hunters at the suggestion, galloped off to surround the motte.

I felt a degree of irresolution and disgust at this cool shedding of blood. I drew my rein almost involuntarily, and moved forward to the spot where the savage had fallen. He lay, back uppermost. He was naked to the breech-clout. There was the

debouchure of a bullet, below the left shoulder; and the black red stream was trickling down his ribs. The limbs still quivered, but it was in the last spasms of parting life!

The hide in which he had disguised himself, lay piled up where it had been flung. Beside it were a bow and several arrows. The latter were crimsoned to the notch—the feathers steeped in blood and clinging to the shafts. They had pierced the huge bodies of the animals, passing through and through. Each arrow had taken many lives!

The old trapper rode up to the corpse; and leisurely dismounted from his mare.

"Fifty dollar a plew," he muttered, unsheathing his knife, and stooping over the body. "It's more 'n I got for my own. It beats beaver all hollow. D—n beaver! say this child. Plew a plug—aint worth trappin if the varmint wur as thick as grass jumpers in calf-time. Ee-up niggur!" he

continued, grasping the long hair of the savage, and holding the face upward, "Let's git a squint at yur phisog. Hooraw! Coyoté-Pash! Hooraw!"

And a gleam of vengeful triumph lit up the countenance of the strange old man, as he uttered these wild exclamations.

"Apash is he?" asked one of the hunters, who had remained near the spot.

"That he are—Coyoté Pash. The very niggurs that bobtailed this child's ears d—n 'em! I kin swar to thur ugly picters anywhur I git my peepers upon 'em. Wou-wough! ole wolfy! got 'ee at last, has he? Yur a beauty, an' no mistake."

So saying, he gathered the long crown locks in his left hand; and with two slashes of his knife—held quarte and tierce—he cut a circle around the top of the head, as perfect as if it had been traced by compasses! He then took a turn of the hair over his wrist—giving it a quick jerk outward. At

the same instant, the keen blade passed under the skin; and the scalp was taken!

"Counts six," he continued, muttering to himself, while placing the scalp in his belt, "six at fifty—three hunder shiners for Pash har: d—n beaver trappin'! say I."

Having secured the bleeding trophy, he wiped his knife upon the hair of one of the buffaloes; and proceeded to cut a small notch in the wood-work of his gun, alongside five others that had been carved there already. These six notches stood for Apachés only; but as my eye wandered along the outlines of the piece, I saw that there were many other columns in that terrible register!

CHAPTER X.

ANOTHER "COUP."

A SHOT ringing in my ears caused me to withdraw my attention from the proceedings of the earless trapper. As I turned I saw a blue cloud floating away over the prairie; but I could not tell at what the shot had been fired. Thirty or forty of the hunters had surrounded the motte; and, halted, were sitting in their saddles in a kind of irregular circle. They were still at some distance from the timber—as if keeping out of arrow-range. They held their guns crosswise; and were shouting to one another.

It was improbable that the savage was alone. Doubtless, there were some of his companions in the thicket. There could not be many, however, for the underwood was not large enough to conceal more than a dozen bodies; and the keen eyes of the hunters were piercing it in every direction.

They reminded me of so many huntsmen in a gorse, waiting the game to be sprung; but here, O God! the game was human!

It was a terrible spectacle. I looked towards Seguin, thinking that he might interfere to prevent the barbarous battue. He noticed my inquiring glance; and turned his face from me. I fancied that he felt ashamed of the work in which his followers were engaged; but the killing, or capture, of whatever Indians might be in the motte, had now become a necessary measure; and I knew that any remonstrance of mine, would be disregarded. As for the men themselves, they would have laughed at it. This

was their pastime—their profession; and I am certain that, at that moment, their feelings were not very different from those which would have actuated them, had they been driving a bear from his den. They were perhaps a trifle more intense; certainly not more inclined towards mercy.

I reined up my horse, and awaited with painful emotions the *dénouément* of this savage drama.

"Vaya Irlandes! What did you see?" inquired one of the Mexicans, appealing to Barney. I saw by this, that it was the Irishman who had fired the shot.

"A rid skin, by japers!" replied the latter.

"Warnt it yer own shadder ye sighted in the water?" cried a hunter, jeeringly.

"May be it was the divil Barney?"

"In trath, frinds, I saw a somethin that looked mighty like him, and I kilt it too."

"Ha! ha! Barney has killed the devil, ha! ha!"

"Wagh!" exclaimed a trapper, spurring his horse toward the thicket; "the fool saw nothin. I'll chance it anyhow."

"Stop, comrade!" cried the hunter Garey; Let's take a safer plan. Red-head's right. Thar's Injun in them bushes, whether he seen it or not; that skunk warnt by himself, I reckin; try this-away!"

The young trapper dismounted, and turned his horse broadside to the bushes. Keeping on the out side, he commenced walking the animal in a spiral ring that gradually closed in upon the clump. In this way his body was screened; and his head only could be seen above the pommel of his saddle, over which he rested his rifle cocked and ready.

Several others, observing this movement on the part of Garey, dismounted, and followed his example.

A deep silence prevailed, as they narrowed the diameters of their circling courses.

In a short time they were close in to the motte; yet still no arrow whizzed out! Was there no one there? So it seemed; and the men pushed fearlessly into the thicket!

I watched all this with excited feelings. I began to hope there was no one in the bushes. I listened to every sound. I heard the snapping of the twigs, and the muttering of the men. There was a moment's silence as they pushed eagerly forward.

Then I heard a sudden exclamation, and a voice calling out,

"Dead red-skin!" Hurrah for Barney!"

"Barney's bullet through him, by the holys!" cried another. "Hilloo old sky-blue! Come hyar and see what ye've done!"

The rest of the hunters, along with the *ci devant* soldier, now rode forward to the copse. I moved slowly after. On coming up, I saw them dragging the body of an Indian into the open ground—a naked

savage, like the other. He was dead, and they were preparing to scalp him.

"Come now, Barney!" cried one of the men in a joking manner, "the har's yourn. Why don't ye off wid it, man?"

"Its moine dev yez say?" asked Barney, appealing to the speaker.

"Sartinly, you killed him—its your'n by right."

"An is it raaly worth fifty dollars?"

"Good as wheat for that."

"Wud yez be so frindly thin as to cut it aff for me?"

"O sartinly, wid all the plizyer of life," replied the hunter, imitating Barney's accent, at the same time severing the scalp, and handing it to him.

Barney took the hideous trophy; and I fancied that he did not feel very proud of it. Poor Celt! He may have been guilty of many a breach in the laws of garrison discipline,

but, it was evident, that this was his first lesson in the letting of human blood!

The hunters now dismounted, and commenced trampling the thicket through and through. The search was most minute, for there was still a mystery. An extra bow—that is to say a third—had been found, with its quiver of arrows! Where was the owner? Could he have escaped from the thicket, while the men were engaged around the fallen buffaloes? He might—though it was barely probable—but the hunters knew that these savages run more like wild animals—like hares—than human beings, and he might have escaped to the Chapparal.

"If that Injun has got clar," said Garey, "we've no time to lose in skinnin' them bufflers. Thar's plenty o' his tribe not twenty mile from hyar, I calclate."

"Look down among the willows there!" cried the voice of the chief, "close down to the water!"

There was a pool. It was turbid and trampled around the edges with buffalo tracks. On one side, it was deep. Here willows drooped over, and hung into the water. Several men pressed into this side; and commenced sounding the bottom with their lances, and the butts of their rifles.

Old Rube had come up among the rest; and was drawing the stopper of his powder horn with his teeth, apparently with the intention of reloading. His small dark eyes were scintillating every way at once—above, around him, and into the water.

A sudden thought seemed to enter his head. I saw him push back the plug—grasp the Irishman, who was nearest him, by the arm; and mutter in a low and hurried voice; "Paddy—Barney! gi' us yur gun—quick, man! quick!"

Barney, at this earnest solicitation, immediately surrendered his piece, taking the

empty rifle that was thrust into his hand by the trapper.

Rube eagerly grasped the musket; and stood, for a moment, as if he was about to fire at some object in the pond. Suddenly he jerked his body round, and, poising the gun upward, fired into the thick foliage!

A shrill scream followed,—a heavy body came slashing through the branches, and struck the ground at my feet. Warm drops sparked into my eyes, causing me to wince. It was blood! I was blinded with it. I rubbed my eyes to clear them. I heard men rushing from all parts of the thicket. When I could see again, a naked savage was just disappearing through the leaves!

"Missed him by h—l," cried the trapper. "D—n yur sodger gun." he added, flinging down the musket; and rushing after with his drawn knife.

I followed among the rest. I heard several

shots as we scrambled through the brush-wood.

When I had got to the outer edge, I could see the Indian still on his feet, and running with the speed of an antelope. He did not keep in a direct line, but zigzag, leaping from side to side, in order to baffle the aim of his pursuers, whose rifles were all the time ringing behind him! As yet none of their bullets had taken effect, at least so as to cripple him. There was a streak of blood visible on his brown body, but the wound, wherever it was, did not seem to hinder him in his flight.

I thought there could be no chance of his escape; and I had no intention of emptying my gun at such a mark. I remained, therefore, among the bushes, screening myself behind the leaves, and watching the chase.

Some of the hunters continued to follow him on foot, while the more cunning ones rushed back for their horses. These happened to be all on the opposite side of the

thicket, with one exception, and that was the mare of the trapper Rube. She was browsing—where Rube had dismounted—out among the slaughtered buffaloes, and directly in the line of the chase.

As the savage approached her, a sudden thought seemed to strike him; and diverging slightly from his course, he plucked up the picket pin—coiled the lasso with the dexterity of a gaucho,—and sprang upon the animal's back!

It was a well-conceived, but unfortunate idea, for the Indian. He had scarcely touched the saddle, when a peculiar shout was heard above all other sounds. It was a call uttered in the voice of the earless trapper. The mustang recognised it, and, instead of running forward obedient to the guidance of her rider, she wheeled suddenly and came galloping back! At this moment, a shot fired at the savage, scored her hip; and, setting back her ears, she commenced

squealing and kicking so violently, that all her feet seemed to be in the air at the same time.

The Indian now endeavoured to fling himself from the saddle, but the alternate plunging of the fore and hind quarters, kept him for some moments tossing, in a sort of balance. He was at length pitched outward; and fell to the ground upon his back. Before he could recover himself, a Mexican had ridden up, and with his long lance pinned him to the earth!

A scene of swearing followed, in which Rube played the principal character—in fact, had "the stage to himself." "Sodger guns" were sent to perdition; and as the old trapper was angry about the wound which his mare had received, "crook-eyed green-horns" came in for a share of his anathemas. The mustang, however, had sustained no serious damage; and after this was ascertained the emphatic ebullitions of her

master's anger subsided into a low growling, and then ceased altogether.

As there appeared no "sign" that there were other savages in the neighbourhood, the next concern of the hunters was to satisfy their hunger. Fires were soon kindled; and a plenteous repast of buffalo meat produced the desired effect.

After the meal was ended, a consultation was held. It was agreed that we should move forward to the old mission—which was known to be not over ten miles distant. We could there defend ourselves in case of an attack from the tribe of Coyoteros, to which the three savages belonged. It was feared by all that these might strike our trail, and come up with us before we could take our departure from the ruin.

The buffaloes were speedily skinned and packed; and taking a westerly course, we journeyed on to the mission.

CHAPTER XI.

A BITTER TAP.

We reached the ruin a little after sunset. We frighted the owl and the wolf; and made our bivouack among the crumbling walls. Our horses were picketed upon the deserted lawns, and in the long-neglected orchards—where the ripe fruit was raining down its ungathered showers. Fires were kindled, lighting the gray pile with their cheerful blazing; and joints of meat were taken out of the hide-packs, and roasted for supper.

There was water in abundance. A branch

of the San Pedro swept past the walls of the mission. There were yams in the spoliated gardens. There were grapes, and pomegranates, and quinces, and melons, and pears, and peaches, and apples; and with all these was our repast garnished.

It was soon over, and videttes were thrown out on the tracks that led to the ruin. The men were weak and weary with their late fasting, and in a short while stretched themselves by their saddles and slept.

So much for our first night at the mission of San Pedro.

We were to remain for three days, or until the buffalo meat should be dried for packing. * * *

They were irksome days to me. Idleness displayed the bad qualities of my half-savage associates. The ribald jest and fearful oath rang continually in my ears, until I was fain to wander off to the woods with the old botanist, who, during these three

days, revelled in the happy excitement of discovery.

I found companionship also in the Maricopa. This strange man had studied science deeply; and was conversant with almost every noted author. He was reserved only when I wished to talk of himself.

Seguin during these days was taciturn and lonely. He took but little heed of what was going on around him. He seemed to be suffering from impatience, as every now and then he paid a visit to the tasajo. He passed many hours upon the adjacent heights, looking anxiously towards the east —that point whence our spies would come in from the Piñon.

There was an *azotea* on the ruin. I was in the habit of seeking this place at evening after the sun had grown less fervid. It afforded a fine prospect of the valley; but its chief attraction, to me, lay in the retirement I could there obtain. The hunters

rarely climbed up to it, and their wild and licensed converse was unheard for the time. I would spread my blanket, among the crumbling parapets, and stretched upon it, deliver myself up to the sweet retrospect, or to still sweeter dreams, that my fancy outlined upon the future. There was but one object on my memory—upon that object only did my hopes dwell.

I need not have made this declaration—at least to those who have truly loved. * *

I am in my favourite place—on the azotea. It is night, yet scarcely seems so. The moon, full-orbed—autumnal—is sweeping up towards the zenith, outlined against a heaven of cloudless blue. In mine own far land, she will be the harvest moon. Here she shines not on the harvest, nor lights the reaper home; but the season, fair in all climes, is not less lovely in this romantic wilderness. I am on a table of the northern Andes, and many thousand feet

above the ocean level. The air is thin and dry. I can perceive its extreme tenuity by the greater distinctness of objects—the apparent propinquity of mountains, that I know to be distant; and the sharpness of their outlines against the sky. I can perceive it in the absence of extreme heat, in the buoyancy of my blood, and the lighter play of my lungs. Ah! this is the home for the hectic cheek and the hollow eye. Would that nations would know this!

The air is vapourless, and filled with the milky moonlight. My eye rests upon curious objects—upon forms of vegetation peculiar to the soil. They interest me with their newness. Under the white light, I see the lanceolate leaves of the yuca, the tall columns of the pitahaya, and the jaggy frondage of the cochineal cactus.

There are sounds upon the air—the noises of the camp—of men and animals—but, thank Heaven! I can only hear their distant hum.

There is another voice more pleasing to my ear. It is the song of the mock-bird, the nightingale of the western world. He pours his mimic notes from the top of an adjacent tree. He is filling the air with his dulcet melody.

The moon is over all, and I watch her in her upward course. There is a thought within me, which she seems to rule—love. How often have poets sung of her power over the gentle passion! With them it was only a fancy—a graceful expression; but in all times, and in all climes, it has been a belief. Whence comes this belief? Has it not been communicated in the whisperings of a God—the same whisperings that tell us of his own existence? May it not be a truth? May not mind in the end, prove to be matter—electric fluid? If so, why not influenced by the silent moon? Why not have its tides, as well as the air and the ocean?

It is hard to yield up our college meta-

physics—to behold the worshipped men of our wrangling days—Stewart, Brown, Locke, Mill, and him of my own name—become degraded under modern light—to see their elaborate structure, like an inverted pyramid, about to tumble down, because the apex, on which it so long balanced itself, turns out to be a false foundation. It is sad to look upon shelves filled with ponderous tomes, whose very existence only proves that our fathers were our children, as we in our time will become the children of our descendants. It is sad to think that so many profound philosophers will one day receive credit only for hair-splitting ingenuity. So will it be.

I followed this train of thought, as I lay drinking in the milky essence of the moon. I dwelt on the scenes suggested by the ruins around me—the deeds and the misdeeds of cowled padrés and their sandaled serfs. Thoughts of these were in my mind, tinging my spirit with the romance of the an-

tique, but they did not long remain objects of reflection. I wandered over them and returned again to think of that fair being so lately loved, and left—Zöe—beautiful Zöe.

Of her I had many thoughts. "Was she thinking of me as well? Was she pained by my absence? Did she watch for my return? Were her eyes bedewed, as she looked from the lonely terrace?"

My heart answered "Yes," with proud and happy pulsations.

The horrid scenes I was now enduring for her sake—how long until they would be over? Days—many days, I feared. I love adventure—my life has been its sport—but such as this was! I had not yet committed crime; though I had countenanced its committal, by the necessity under which I had placed myself. How long before this necessity might force me into the enacting of deeds, dark as those of the men who surrounded me!

In the programme placed before me by Seguin, I had not bargained for such wanton cruelties as I was now compelled to witness. It was not the time to look back; but forward—and, perhaps, over other scenes of blood and brutality—to that happier hour, when I should have redeemed my promise, and won the prize—Zöe—beautiful Zöe!

* * * *

My reverie was interrupted. I heard voices, and footsteps. They were approaching the spot where I lay. I could see there were two men engaged in an earnest conversation. They did not notice me, as I was behind some fragments of the broken parapet, and in the shadow. As they drew nearer, I recognised the patois of my Canadian follower, and that of his companion was not to be mistaken. The brogue was Barney's beyond a doubt.

These worthies, I had lately noticed, had become as "thick as thieves;" and were

much in each other's company. Some act of kindness had endeared the "infantry" to his more astute and experienced associate—who had taken him under "his patronage and protection."

I was vexed at the intrusion; but, prompted by some impulse of curiosity, I lay still, and listened.

Barney was speaking as they approached.

"In trath, Misther Gowdey; an' it's meself 'ud go far this blissed night for a dhrap o' the crayter. I noticed the little kig afore; but divil resave me! av I thought it was anything barrin' cowld water. Vistment! only think o' the owld Dutch sinner bringin' a whole kig wid 'im, an' keepin' it all to himself. Yez are sure now it's the stuff?"

"Oui — oui!— C'est liqueur — *aguardiente.*"

"Agwardenty ye say, div ye?"

"Oui! c'est vrai, Monsieur Barney. I have

him smell, ver many time. It is of stink tre fort—dam strong!—dam good!"

"But why cudn't ye stale it yerself? Yez know exactly where the Doctor keeps it; an' ye might get at it a hape handier than I can."

"Pourquois, Barney? pecause, mon ami, I help pack les possibles of Monsieur le Docteur. Par dieu! he would me suspect."

"I don't see the raizon clear. He may suspict ye at all evints How, thin?"

"Ah! then, n'importe. I sall make von grand swear, No. I sall have ver clear conscience then."

"Be the powers! we must get the licker anyhow; an' av you won't, Misther Gowdey, I will; that's said, isn't it?"

"Oui! Tres bien!"

"Well, thin, now or niver's the time. The owld fellow's just walked out, for I saw him meself. This is a nate place to drink it in.

Come, an' show me where he keeps it; and by St. Patrick, I'm yer man to hook it."

"Tres bien! allons! Monsieur Barney, allons!"

Unintelligible as this conversation may appear, I understood every word of it. The naturalist had brought among his packs a small keg of *aguardiente*—mezcal spirits—for the purpose of preserving any new species of the lizard or snake tribe he should chance to fall in with. What I heard, then, was neither more nor less than a plot to steal the keg and its contents!

My first impulse was to leap up and stop them in their design, as well as administer a salutary rebuke to my voyageur, and his red-haired companion. But a moment's reflection convinced me, that they could be better punished in another way. I would leave them to punish themselves.

I remembered, that some days previous to our reaching the Ojo de Vaca, the Doc-

tor had captured a snake of the adder kind, two or three species of lizards, and a hideous-looking animal, called, in hunter phraseology, the horned frog—the *agama cornuta* of Texas and Mexico. These he had immersed into the keg, for preservation. I had observed him do so, and it was evident that neither my Frenchman nor the Irishman had any idea of this. I adopted the resolution, therefore, to let them drink a full bumper of the "pickle" before I should interfere.

Knowing that they would soon return with the keg, I remained where I was.

I had not long to wait upon them. In a few minutes they came up, Barney carrying, what I knew to be, the devoted keg.

They sat down close to where I lay; and, prying out the bung, filled the liquor into their tin cups, and commenced imbibing.

A drouthier pair of mortals could not have been found anywhere; and, at the first

draught, each emptied his cup to the bottom!

"It has a quare taste, hasn't it;" said Barney, after he had taken the vessel from his lips.

"Oui! c'est vrai, Monsieur!"

"What dev ye think it is?"

"Je ne scais quoi. It smell like one dam —one dam—"

"Is it fish ye mane?"

"Oui! like one dam feesh—un bouquet tre bizarre. Fichtre!"

"I suppose its something that the Mexicans have drapped in to give the agwardenty a flayver. It's mighty strong anyhow. It's nothing the worse av that; but it 'ud be sorry drinkin' alongside a nate dimmyjan of Irish patyeen. Och! mother av Moses! but that's the raal bayvaridge!"

Here the Irishman shook his head to express with more emphasis his admiration of the "native" whiskey.

"Well, Misther Gowdey," continued he, "whiskey's whiskey at any rate; and if we can't get the butther, it's no raison we should refuse the brid; so I'll thank ye for another small thrifle out of the kig," and the speaker held out his tin vessel to be replenished.

Godé lifted the keg; and emptied more of its contents into their cups.

"Mon Dieu! what is dis in my cops?" exclaimed he, after a draught.

"Pwhat is it? Let me see. That! Be me sowl! that's a quare-looking crayter any how."

"Sac-r-r-re! it is von dam Texan—von fr-r-og! Dat is de dam feesh we smell stink. Owah—ah—ah!"

"Oh! by the howly mother! if here isn't another in moine! Jaysus! it's a scurpion lizard! Hoach—wach—wach!"

"Ow—ah—ah—ach—ack! Mon Dieu! Oach—ach—. Sac-r! O—ach—ach—o—oa—a—ach!"

"Tare an ages! Ho—ach—the owld doctor has—oach—ack—ack! Blessed Vargin! Ha—ho—hoh—ack! Poison! Poison!'

And the brace of revellers went staggering over the azotea, delivering their stomachs; and ejaculating in extreme terror, as the thought struck them, that there might be poison in the pickle!

I had risen to my feet, and was enjoying the joke in loud laughter. This and the exclamations of the men brought a crowd of hunters up to the roof; who, as soon as they perceived what had happened, joined in, and made the ruin ring with their wild peals.

The doctor, who had come up among the rest, was not so well satisfied with the occurrence. After a short search, however, the lizards were found, and returned to the keg; which still contained enough of the spirit for his purposes. It was not likely to be disturbed again, by the thirstiest hunter in the band.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PHANTOM CITY.

On the morning of the fourth day, our spies came in, and reported that the Navajoes *had taken the southern trail!*

They had returned to the spring, on the second day after our leaving it; and thence, had followed the guiding of the arrows. It was Dacoma's band—in all about three hundred warriors.

Nothing remained for us now, but to pack up as quickly as possible, and pursue our march to the north.

In an hour we were in our saddles, and following the rocky banks of the San Pedro.

A long day's journey brought us to the desolate valley of the Gila, upon whose waters we encamped for the night. We slept near the celebrated ruins—the second resting place of the migrating Aztecs.

With the exception of the botanist, the Coco chief, myself, and perhaps Seguin, no one in the band seemed to trouble himself about these interesting antiquities. The "sign" of grizzly bears, that was discovered upon the mud bottom, gave the hunters far more concern than the broken pottery and its painted hieroglyphics. Two of these animals were discovered near the camp, and a fierce battle ensued, in which one of the Mexicans nearly lost his life—escaping, only, after most of the skin had been clawed from his head and neck! The bears themselves were killed, and made part of our suppers.

Our next day's march lay up the Gila, to the mouth of the San Carlos river, where we again halted for the night. The San Carlos

runs in from the north; and Seguin had resolved to travel up this stream for a hundred miles or so, and afterwards strike eastward to the country of the Navajoes.

When this determination was made known, a spirit of discontent showed itself among the men; and mutinous whisperings were heard on all sides.

However, shortly after we halted, several of them strayed up the banks of the stream, and gathered some grains of gold out of its bed. The indications of the precious metal —the *quixa*—known among the Mexicans as the "gold mother," was found among the rocks. There were miners in the band, who knew it well,—and this served to satisfy them. There was no more talk of keeping on to the Prieto. Perhaps the San Carlos might prove equally rich. Rumour had also given it the title of a "golden river;" at all events, the expedition must cross the head waters of the Prieto in its journey eastward;

and this prospect had the effect of quieting the mutineers, at least for the time.

There was another influence—the character of Seguin. There was no single individual in the band, who cared to cross him on slight grounds. They knew him too well for that; and though few of these men set high value on their lives, when they believed themselves, according to "mountain law" in the right—yet, they knew, that to delay the expedition for the purpose of gathering gold, was neither according to their compact with him, nor agreeable to his wishes. Not a few of the band, moreover, were actuated by motives similar to those felt by Seguin himself; and these were equally desirous of pushing on to the Navajo towns.

Still another consideration had its influence upon the majority. The party of Dacoma would be on our track, as soon as they had returned from the Apaché trail. We had, therefore, no time to waste in gold

seeking; and the simplest of the scalp-hunters knew this.

By daybreak, we were again on the march; and riding up the banks of the San Carlos.

We had now entered the great desert which stretches northward from the Gila, away to the head waters of the Colorado. We entered it without a guide—for not one of the band had ever traversed these unknown regions. Even Rube knew nothing about this part of the country. We were without compass too, but this we needed not. There were few in the band who could not point to the north, or the south, within the variation of a degree—few of them but could—night or day—tell, by the heavens, within ten minutes of the true time! Give them but a clear sky—with the "signs" of the trees and rocks—and they needed neither compass nor chronometer. A life spent beneath the blue heaven of the prairie-uplands and the mountain "parks"—where a roof

rarely obstructed their, view of the azure vault—had made astronomers of these reckless rovers!

Of such accomplishments was their education—drawn from many a perilous experience. To me, their knowledge of such things seemed "instinct."

But we had a guide as to our direction, unerring as the magnetic needle; we were traversing the region of the "polar plant" the planes of whose leaves, at almost every step, pointed out our meridian! It grew upon our track; and was crushed under the hoofs of our horses, as we rode onward.

For several days, we travelled northward through a country of strange looking mountains, whose tops shot heavenward in fantastic forms and groupings. At one time we saw shapes semiglobular like the domes of churches. At another, Gothic turrets rose before us; and the next opening brought in view, sharp needle-pointed peaks, shooting

upward into the blue sky! We saw columnar forms supporting others that lay horizontally—vast boulders of trap-rock suggesting the idea of some antediluvian ruin—some temple of gigantic Druids!

Along with singularity of formation, was the most brilliant colouring. There were stratified rocks, red, white, green, and yellow—as vivid in their hues as if freshly touched from the palette of the painter!

No smoke had tarnished them since they had been flung up from their subterranean beds. No cloud draped their naked outlines. It was not a land of clouds, for as we journeyed among them, we saw not a speck in the heavens. Nothing above us, but the blue and limitless ether!

I remembered the remarks of Seguin.

There was something inspiriting in the sight of these bright mountains—something life-like—that prevented us from feeling the extreme and real desolation by which we

were surrounded. At times, we could not help fancying that we were in a thickly populated country—a country of vast wealth and civilisation—as appeared from its architectural grandeur! Yet in reality we were journeying through the wildest of earth's dominions—where no human foot ever trod, excepting such as wear the moccason—the region of the "wolf" Apaché, and the wretched Yamparico!

We travelled up the banks of the river, and, here and there, at our halting places, searched for the shining metal. It could be found only in small quantities; and the hunters began to talk loudly of the Prieto. There, according to them, the yellow gold lay in "lumps."

On the fourth day after leaving the Gila, we came to a place where the San Carlos cañoned through a high sierra. Here we halted for the night. When morning came we found we could follow the river no far-

ther, without climbing over the mountain; and Seguin announced his intention of leaving it, and striking eastward. The hunters responded to this declaration with a wild hurrah! The golden vision was again before them.

We remained at the San Carlos until after the noon heat—recruiting our horses by the stream. Then mounting, we rode forward into the plain. It was our intention to travel all night, or until we reached water—as we knew that without this, halting would be useless.

We had not ridden far, until we saw that a fearful "Jornada" was before us—one of those dreaded "stretches" without grass, wood, or water. Ahead of us we could see a low range of mountains, trending from north to south; and beyond these, another range still higher than the first. On the farther range there were snowy summits. We saw that they were distinct chains, and

that the more distant was of great elevation. This we knew from the appearance upon its peaks of the "eternal snow."

We knew, moreover, that at the foot of the snowy range we should find water—perhaps the river we were in search of—but the distance was immense. If we did not find it at the nearer sierra, we would have an adventure—the danger of perishing from thirst. Such was the prospect!

We rode on over the arid soil—over plains of lava, and cut-rock, that wounded the hoofs of our horses, laming many. There was no vegetation around us, except the sickly green of the artemisia, or the fetid foliage of the creosote plant. There was no living thing to be seen—save the brown and hideous lizard, the rattle-snake, the desert crickets that crawled in myriads along the parched ground, and were crunched under the hoofs of our animals! "Water!" was the word that began to be uttered in many a language.

"Water," cried the choking trapper.

"L'eau!" ejaculated the Canadian.

"Agua! agua!" shouted the Mexican.

We were not twenty miles from the San Carlos, before our gourd canteens were as dry as a shingle! The dust of the plains, and the hot atmosphere, had created unusual thirst; and we had soon emptied them.

We had started late in the afternoon. At sundown the mountains ahead of us did not seem a single mile nearer! We travelled all night, and when the sun rose again, we were still a good distance from them! Such is the illusive character of this elevated and crystal atmosphere.

The men mumbled as they talked. They held in their mouths leaden bullets, and pebbles of obsidian—which they chewed with a desperate fierceness.

It was some time after sunrise, when we arrived at the mountain foot. To our consternation, no water could be found!

The mountains were a range of dry rocks —so parched-like and barren, that even the creosote bush could not find nourishment along their sides. They were as naked of vegetation as when the volcanic fires first heaved them into the light!

Parties scattered in all directions, and went up the ravines; but after a long while spent in fruitless wandering, we abandoned the search in despair.

There was a pass that appeared to lead through the range; and entering this, we rode forward in silence and with gloomy thoughts.

We soon debouched on the other side, when a scene of singular character burst upon our view.

A plain lay before us, hemmed in on all sides by high mountains. On its farther edge was the snowy ridge, whose stupendous cliffs rose vertically from the plain, towering thousands of feet in height. Dark

rocks seemed piled upon each other, higher and higher, until they became buried under robes of the spotless snow!

But that which appeared most singular was the surface of the plain. It was covered with a mantle of virgin whiteness—apparently of snow—and yet the more elevated spot from which we viewed it was naked, with a hot sun shining upon it! What we saw in the valley then could not be snow.

As I gazed over the monotonous surface of this plain, and then looked upon the chaotic mountains that walled it in, my mind became impressed with ideas of coldness and desolation. It seemed as if everything was dead around us, and nature was laid out in her winding sheet! I saw that my companions experienced similar feelings—but no one spoke; and we commenced riding down the pass that led into this singular valley.

As far as we could see, there was no prospect of water on the plain; but what

else could we do than cross it? On its most distant border, along the base of the snowy mountains, we thought we could distinguish a black line—like that of timber—and for this point we directed our march.

On reaching the plain, what had appeared like snow, proved to be soda! A deep incrustation of this lay upon the ground—enough to satisfy the wants of the whole human race—yet there it lay, and no hand had ever stooped to gather it!

Three or four rocky buttes were in our way, near the debouchure of the pass. As we rounded them, getting farther out into the plain, a wide gap began to unfold itself, opening through the mountains. Through this gap the sun's rays were streaming in—throwing a band of yellow light across one end of the valley. In this the crystals of the soda, stirred up by the breeze appeared floating in myriads.

As we descended, I observed that objects

began to assume a very different aspect from what they had exhibited from above. As if by enchantment, the cold snowy surface all at once, disappeared. Green fields lay before us, and tall trees sprang up covered with a thick and verdant frondage!

"Cottonwoods!" cried a hunter, as his eye rested on these still distant groves.

"Tall saplins at that—Wagh!" ejaculated another."

"Water thar, fellers, I reckin," remarked a third.

"Yes sirree! yer dont see such sprouts as them growing out o' a dry peraira. Look! hilloa!"

"By Gollies, yonder's a house!"

"A house? one—two—three—a house? thar's a whole town, if thar's a single shanty. Gee! Jim, look yonder. Wagh!"

I was riding in front with Seguin—the rest of the band strung out behind us. I had been for some time gazing upon the

ground, in a sort of abstraction—looking at the snow-white efflorescence, and listening to the crunching of my horse's hoofs through its icy incrustation. These exclamatory phrases caused me to raise my eyes. The sight that met them was one that made me rein up with a sudden jerk. Seguin had done the same, and I saw that the whole band had halted with a similar impulse!

We had just cleared one of the buttes, that had hitherto obstructed our view of the great gap. This was now directly in front of us; and along its base, on the southern side, rose the walls and battlements of a city—a vast city judging from its distance, and the colossal appearance of its architecture! We could trace the columns of temples, and doors, and gates, and windows, and balconies, and parapets, and spires! There were many towers rising high over the roofs; and in

the middle was a temple-like structure, with its massive dome towering far above all the others!

I looked upon this sudden apparition with a feeling of incredulity. It was a dream, an imagination, a *mirage!* Ha! it was the *mirage.*

But no! The mirage could not effect such a complete picture. There were the roofs, and chimneys, and walls, and windows! There were the parapets of fortified houses, with their regular notches and embrazures! It was a reality. It *was* a city!

Was it the Cibolo of the Spanish Padré? Was it that city of golden gates, and burnished towers? Was the story of the wandering priest after all true? Who had proved it a fable? Who had ever penetrated this region, the very country in which the ecclesiastic represented the golden city of Cibolo to exist?

I saw that Seguin was puzzled—dismayed

—as well as myself! He knew nothing of this land. He had never witnessed a mirage like that!

For some time we sat in our saddles, influenced by strange emotions. Shall we go forward? Yes! We must reach water. We are dying of thirst; and, impelled by this, we spur onward.

We had ridden only a few paces farther, when the hunters uttered a sudden and simultaneous cry! A new object—an object of terror—was before us! Along the mountain foot appeared a string of dark forms. *They were mounted men!*

We dragged our horses to their haunches —our whole line halting as one man!

"Injuns!" was the exclamation of several.

"Indians they must be," muttered Seguin. "There are no other here—Indians! No! There never were such as them. See! they are not men! Look! their huge horses—their long guns—*they are giants!*

By heaven!" continued he, after a moment's pause, "they are bodiless! *They are phantoms!*"

There were exclamations of terror from the hunters behind.

Were these the inhabitants of the city? There was a striking proportion in the colossal size of the horses and the horsemen!

For a moment I was awe-struck like the rest. Only a moment. A sudden memory flashed upon me. I thought of the Hartz mountains, and their demons. I knew that the phenomena before us could be no other —an optical delusion—a creation of the *mirage.*

I raised my hand above my head. The foremost of the giants imitated the motion!

I put spurs to my horse, and galloped forward. So did he, as if to meet me! After a few springs, I had passed the refracting angle; and, like a thought, the shadowy giant vanished into air!

The men had ridden forward after me; and, having also passed the angle of refraction, saw no more of the phantom host.

The city, too, had disappeared; but we could trace the outlines of many a singular formation in the trap-rock strata that traversed the edge of the valley.

The tall groves were no longer to be seen; but a low belt of green willows—real willows—could be distinguished along the foot of the mountain within the gap! Under their foliage there was something that sparkled in the sun like sheets of silver. *It was water!* It was a branch of the Prieto!

Our horses neighed at the sight; and shortly after we had alighted upon its banks, and were kneeling before the sweet spirit of the stream!

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MOUNTAIN OF GOLD.

After so fatiguing a march, it was necessary to make a longer halt than usual. We stayed by the arroyo all that day and the following night. But the hunters longed to drink from the Prieto itself; and next morning we drew our pickets, and rode in the direction of that river. By noon we were upon its banks.

A singular river it was—running through a region of bleak, barren, and desolate mountains. Through these the stream had forged

its way by numerous cañons, and rushed along a channel at most places inaccessible. It was a black and gloomy river. Where were its sands of gold?

After riding for some distance along its banks, we halted at a point where its bed could be reached. The hunters, disregarding all else, clambered eagerly over the steep bluffs, and descended to the water. They hardly stayed to drink. They crawled through narrow interstices, between detached masses of rock that had fallen from above. They lifted the mud in their hands, and washed it in their cups—they hammered the quartz-rock with their tomahawks, and pounded it between great stones. Not a particle of the precious metal could be found! They must either have struck the river too high up; or else the El Dorado lay still farther to the north.

Wet, weary, angry, muttering oaths and expressions of disappointment, they obeyed the signal to "march forward."

We rode up the stream, halting for the night at another place where the water was accessible to our animals.

Here the hunters again searched for gold, and again found it not. Mutinous murmurs were now spoken aloud. The gold country lay below them—they had no doubt of it. The chief took them by the San Carlos on purpose to disappoint them. He knew this would prevent delay. He cared not for them. His own ends were all he wanted to accomplish. They might go back as poor as they had come, for ought he cared. They would never have so good a chance again.

Such were their mutterings, embellished with many an oath.

Seguin either heard not, or did not heed them. He was one of those characters, who can patiently bear until a proper cue for action may offer itself. He was fiery by nature—like all Creoles—but time and trials had tempered him to that calmness and

coolness that befitted the leader of such a band. When roused to action he became, what is styled in western phraseology a "dangerous man;" and the scalp-hunters knew it. He heeded not their murmurings.

Long before daybreak, we were once more in our saddles, and moving onward, still up the Prieto. We had observed fires at a distance during the night, and we knew that they were at the villages of the "Club" Apaché. We wished to pass their country without being seen; and it was our intention, when daylight appeared, to caché among the rocks until the following night.

As dawn advanced, we halted in a concealed ravine, whilst several of us climbed the hill to reconnoitre. We could see the smoke rising over the distant villages; but we had passed them in the darkness; and instead of remaining in caché we continued on through a wide plain covered with sage

and cactus plants. Mountains towered up on every side of us as we advanced. They rose directly from the plains, exhibiting the fantastic shapes which characterise them in these regions. Their stupendous precipices overlooked the bleak barren tables frowning upon them in sublime silence. The plains themselves ran into the very bases of these cliffs. Water had surely washed them! These plateaus had once been the bed of an ancient ocean! I remembered Seguin's theory of the inland seas.

Shortly after sunrise, the trail we were following led us to an Indian crossing. Here we forded the stream with the intention of leaving it, and heading eastward.

We halted our horses in the water, permitting them to drink freely. Some of the hunters, moving a-head of the rest, had climbed the high banks. We were attracted by their unusual exclamations. On looking upward, we perceived several of them stand-

ing on the top of a hill, and pointing to the north in an earnest and excited manner! Could it be Indians?

"What is it?" shouted Seguin, as we pushed forward.

"A gold mountain! a gold mountain!" was the reply.

We spurred our horses hurriedly up the hill. On reaching its top, a strange sight met our gaze. Away to the north, and as far as the eye could see, an object glistened in the sun. It was a mountain, and along its sides, from base to summit, the rocks glittered with the bright semblance of gold! A thousand jets danced in the sunbeam, dazzling the eye as it looked upon them. Was it a mountain of gold?

The men were in a frenzy of delight. This was the mountain so often discussed over the bivouack fires. Who of them had not heard of it—whether credulous or not? It was no fable then. There it was, before them in all its burning splendour!

I turned to look at Seguin. His brow was bent. There was the exprsssion of anxiety in his countenance. He understood the illusion. So did the Maricopa. So did Reichter. I knew it too. At a glance I had recognised the sparkling scales of the selenite!

Seguin saw that there was a difficulty before us. This dazzling hallucination lay far out of our course; but it was evident that neither commands nor persuasion would be heeded now. The men were resolved upon reaching it. Some of them had already turned their horses' heads and were moving in that direction.

Seguin ordered them back. A stormy altercation ensued—in short, a mutiny.

In vain Seguin urged the necessity of our hastening forward to the town. In vain he represented the danger we were in of being overtaken by Dacoma's party—who by this were upon our trail. In vain the Coco chief, the doctor, and myself, assured our

uneducated companions that what they saw was but the glancing surface of a worthless rock. The men were obstinate. The sight, operating upon long cherished hopes, had intoxicated them. They had lost all reason. They were mad!

"On then!" cried Seguin, making a desperate effort to restrain his passion. "On madmen, and satisfy yourselves! Our lives may answer for your folly!" and, so saying, he turned his horse, and headed him for the shining beacon.

The men rode after, uttering loud and joyful acclamations.

At the end of a long day's ride we reached the base of the mountain. The hunters leaped from their horses, and clambered up to the glittering rocks. They reached them. They broke them with their tomahawks and pistol-butts, and cleft them with their knives. They tore off the plates of mica and glassy selenite. They flung them at their feet

abashed and mortified; and, one after another, came back to the plain with looks of disappointment and chagrin! Not one of them said a word, as they climbed into their saddles, and rode sullenly after the chief.

We had lost a day by this aimless journey; but our consolation lay in the belief, that our Indian pursuers following upon our trail would make the same detour.

Our course now lay to the south-west; but finding a spring not far from the foot of the mountain, we remained by it for the night.

After another day's march in a south-easterly course, Rube recognised the profiles of the mountains. We were nearing the great town of the Navajoes!

That night we encamped on a running water—a branch of the Prieto that headed to the eastward. A vast chasm between two cliffs marked the course of the stream

above us. The guide pointed into the gap, as we rode forward to our halting place.

"What is it Rube?" inquired Seguin.

"Ee see that gully a-head o' us."

"Yes—What of it?"

"The town's thur."

CHAPTER XIV.

NAVAJOA.

It was near evening of the next day, when we arrived at the foot of the sierra, at the debouchure of the Cañon.

We could not follow the stream any farther, as there was no path by the channel. It would be necessary to pass over the ridge that formed the southern jaw of the chasm. There was a plain trail among scrubby pines; and, following our guide, we commenced riding up the mountain.

After ascending for an hour or so by a fearful road along the very brink of the precipice, we climbed the crest of the ridge, and

looked eastward. We had reached the goal of our journey. The town of the Navajoes was before us!

"*Voila!*" "*Mira el pueblo!*" "Thar's the town!" "Hurrah!" were the exclamations that broke from the hunters.

"O God! at last it is," muttered Seguin, with a singular expression of countenance. "O God be praised! Halt, comrades! Halt!"

Our reins were tightened; and we sat on our weary horses, looking over the plain. A magnificent panorama—magnificent under any circumstances—lay below us; but its interest was heightened by the peculiar circumstances, under which we viewed it.

We are at the western extremity of an oblong valley looking up it lengthwise. It is not a valley—though so called in the language of Spanish America—but a plain walled in, on all sides, by mountains. It is elliptical in form—the diameter of its foci being ten or twelve miles in length. Its shortest diameter

is five or six. It has the surface of a green meadow, and its perfect level is unbroken by brake, bush, or hillock. It looks like some quiet lake transformed into an emerald!

It is bisected by a line of silvery brightness that curves gracefully through its whole extent, marking the windings of a crystal stream.

But the mountains! What wild looking mountains—particularly those on the north side of the valley! They are granite upheaved. Nature must have warred at the birth of these. The very sight of them suggests the throes of a troubled planet. Huge rocks hang over, only half resting upon fearful precipices—vast boulders that seem as though the touch of a feather would cause them to topple down! Grim chasms open into deep dark defiles, that lie silent and solemn and frowning! Here and there, stunted trees—the cedar and piñon—hang

horizontally out—clinging along the cliffs. The unsightly limbs of the cactus, and the gloomy foliage of the creosote bush grow together in seams of the rock, heightening their character of ruggedness and gloom. Such is the southern barrier of the valley.

Look upon the northern sierra. Here is a contrast—a new geology. Not a rock of granite meets the eye; but there are others piled as high, and glistening with the whiteness of snow! These are mountains of the milky quartz. They exhibit a variety of peaks—naked and shining,—crags that hang over deep treeless ravines, and needle-shaped summits aspiring to the sky. They too have their vegetation,—a vegetation that suggests ideas of the desert and desolation.

The two sierras appear to converge at the eastern end of the valley. We are upon a transverse ridge that shuts it in upon the west; and from this point we view the picture.

Where the valley ends eastwardly, we perceive a dark back ground lying up against the mountains. We know it is a pine forest; but we are at too great a distance to distinguish the trees. Out of this forest the stream appears to issue; and upon its banks, near the border of the woods, we perceive a collection of strange pyramidal structures. They are houses. It is the town of Navajoa!

Our eyes were directed upon it with eager gaze. We could trace the outlines of the houses—though they stood nearly ten miles distant. They suggested images of a strange architecture. There were some standing apart from the rest, with terraced roofs, and we could see there were banners waving over them! One larger than the rest, presented the appearance of a temple. It was out on the open plain, and by the glass we could detect numerous forms clustered upon its top—the forms of human beings. There were others upon the roofs and parapets of the smaller

houses; and many more moving upon the plain nearer to us, driving before them flocks of animals—mules and mustangs. Some were down upon the banks of the river; and others, we could see, plunging about in the water.

Several droves of horses—whose mottled flanks showed their descent—were quietly browsing in the open prairie. Flocks of wild swans, geese, and gruyas winged their way up and down the meandering current of the stream.

The sun was setting. The mountains were tinged with an amber-coloured light; and the quartzose crystals sparkled on the peaks of the southern sierra.

It was a scene of silent beauty. How long, thought I, ere its silence be broken by the sounds of ravage and ruin!

We remained for some time gazing up the valley, without any one uttering his thoughts. It was the silence that precedes resolve. In the minds of my companions

there were varied emotions at play—varied in kind, as they differed in intensity—differing as widely as heaven from hell!

Some were holy. Men sat straining their eyes over the long reach of meadow, thinking—or fancying, that in the distance they might distinguish a loved object—a wife—a sister—a daughter—or perhaps the object of a still dearer and deeper affection. No—that could not be. None could have been more deeply affected than he who was seeking for his child. A father's love was the strongest passion there.

Alas! there were other emotions in the bosoms of those around me—passions dark and sinful. Fierce looks were bent upon the town. Some of these betokened feelings of revenge; others indicated the desire of plunder; and still others spoke, fiend-like, of *murder!* There had been mutterings of this from day to day, as we journeyed. Men—disappointed in their golden dreams—had been heard to talk about the *price of scalps!*

By a command from Seguin the hunters drew back among the trees; and entered into a hurried council. How was the town to be taken? We could not approach it in the open light. The inhabitants would see us, before we could ride up; and make their escape to the forest beyond. This would defeat the whole purpose of our expedition.

Could a party not get round to the eastern end of the valley, and prevent this? Not through the plain itself, for the mountains rested upon its surface, without either foot-hills or paths along their sides. In some places vast cliffs rose to the height of a thousand feet, stepping directly upon the level plain. This idea was given up.

Could we not turn the southern sierra, and come in through the forest itself? This would bring us close to the houses under cover. The guide was questioned; and answered in the affirmative. But that

could only be accomplished by making a detour of nearly fifty miles. We had no time for such a journey; and the thought was abandoned.

The town then must be approached in the night. This was the only plan practicable—at least the most likely to succeed. It was adopted.

It was not Seguin's intention to make a night attack; but only to surround the buildings, keeping at some distance out, and remain in ambush till the morning. All retreat would thus be cut off; and we should make sure of taking our captives under the light of day.

The men threw themselves to the ground; and, holding their bridles, waited the going down of the sun.

CHAPTER XV.

THE NIGHT AMBUSCADE.

A SHORT hour passes. The bright orb sinks behind us; and the quartz rock saddens into a sombre hue. The straggling rays of twilight hover but a moment over the chalky cliffs, and then vanish away. It is night.

Descending the hills in a long string, we arrive upon the plain. We turn to the left and keep round the mountain foot. The rocks guide us.

We proceed with caution, and exchange our

words only in whispers. We crawl around and among loose boulders, that have fallen from above. We turn many spurs, that shoot out into the plain. Occasionally, we halt, and hold council.

After a journey of ten or twelve miles, we find ourselves opposite the Indian town. We are not over a mile from it. We can see the fires burning on the plain; and hear the voices of those who move around them.

At this point, the band is divided. A small party remains, making its caché in a defile among the rocks. These guard the captive chief and the atajo of mules. The rest move forward, guided by Rube, who carries them around the edge of the forest—here and there dropping a picket of several men as he proceeds.

These parties conceal themselves at their respective stations—remain silent—and wait for the signal from the bugle—which is to be given about the hour of daybreak.

The night passes slowly and silently. The fires, one by one, go out, until the plain is wrapped in the gloom of a moonless midnight. Dark clouds travel over the sky, portending rain—a rare phenomenon in these regions. The swan utters its wild note—the gruya whoops over the stream—and the wolf howls upon the skirts of the sleeping village. The voice of the bull-bat wails through the air. You hear the "flap-flap" of his long wings as he dashes down among the cocuyos. You hear the hoof-stroke on the hard plain—the "crop" of the browsing steed, and the tinkling of the bit-ring—for the horses eat bridled. At intervals, a drowsy hunter mutters through his sleep—battling, in dreams, with some terrible foe. Thus goes the night. These are its voices.

They cease as daybreak approaches. The wolf howls no longer. The swan and the blue crane are silent. The night-hawk has

filled his ravenous maw, and perches on the mountain pine. The fire flies go out, chased by the colder hours; and the horses—having eaten what grew within their reach—stand, in lounging attitudes—asleep.

A grey light begins to steal into the valley. It flickers along the white cliffs of the quartz mountain. It brings with it a raw cold air, that wakes the hunters.

One by one they arouse themselves. They shiver as they stand up; and carry their blankets wrapped about their shoulders. They feel weary, and look pale and haggard. The grey dawn lends a ghastly hue to their dusty beards and unwashed faces.

After a short while they coil up their trail ropes, and fasten them to the rings. They look to their flints and priming; and tighten the buckles of their belts. They draw forth from their haversacks pieces of dry tasajo—eating it raw. They stand by their horses, ready to mount. It is not yet time.

The light is gathering into the valley. The blue mist, that hung over the river during the night, is rising upward. We can see the town. We can trace the odd outlines of the houses. What strange structures they are!

Some of them are higher than others, one—two—four stories in height! They are in form like a pyramid without its apex. Each upper story is smaller than that below it—the roofs of the lower ones serving as terraces for those above. They are of a whitish yellow, the colour of the clay with which they are built. They are without windows, but doors lead into each story from the outside; and ladders stretch from terrace to terrace, leaning against the walls. On the tops of some there are poles carrying bannerets. These are the residences of the principal war-chiefs and great warriors of the nation.

We can see the temple distinctly. It is

like the houses in shape, but higher and of larger dimensions. There is a tall shaft rising out of its roof, and a banner with a strange device floating at its peak!

Near the houses we see *corrals* filled with mules and mustangs—the live stock of the village.

The light grows stronger. Forms appear upon the roofs, and move along the terraces. They are human forms enveloped in hanging garments, robe-like and striped. We recognise the Navajo blanket, with its alternate bands of black and white.

With the glass we can see these forms more distinctly—we can tell their sex.

Their hair hangs loosely upon their shoulders, and far down their backs. Most of them are females—girls and women. There are many children, too. There are men white-haired and old. A few other men appear, but they are not warriors. The warriors are absent.

They come down the ladders, descending from terrace to terrace. They go out upon the plain, and rekindle the fires. Some carry earthen vessels—ollas—upon their heads, and pass down to the river. They go in for water. These are nearly naked. We can see their brown bodies, and uncovered breasts. They are slaves.

See! the old men are climbing to the top of the temple. They are followed by women and children—some in white, others in bright coloured costumes. These are girls and young lads, the children of the chiefs.

Over an hundred have climbed up. They have reached the highest roof There is an altar near the staff. A smoke rolls up—a blaze—they have kindled a fire upon the altar!

Listen! the chaunt of voices, and the beat of an Indian drum!

The sounds cease; and they all stand motionless and apparently silent, facing to the east!

"What does it mean?"

"They are waiting for the sun to appear. These people worship him."

The hunters, interested and curious, strain their eyes, watching the ceremony.

The topmost pinnacle of the quartz mountain is on fire! It is the first flash of the sun!

The peak is yellowing downward. Other points catch the brilliant beams. They have struck the faces of the devotees. See! there are white faces! One—two—many white faces both of women and girls!

"O God! grant that it may be!" cries Seguin, hurriedly putting up the glass, and raising the bugle to his lips.

A few wild notes peal over the valley. The horsemen hear the signal. They debouch from the woods, and the defiles of the mountains. They gallop over the plain—deploying as they go.

In a few minutes we have formed the arc

of a circle—concave to the town. Our horses' heads are turned inward, and we ride forward, closing upon the walls.

We have left the atajo in the defile—the captive chief too, guarded by a few of the men.

The notes of the bugle have summoned the attention of the inhabitants. They stand for awhile in amaze, and without motion. They behold the deployment of the line. They see the horsemen ride inward!

Could it be a mock surprise of some friendly tribe? No. That strange voice—the bugle—is new to Indian ears; yet some of them have heard it before. They know it to be the war-trumpet of the pale faces!

For awhile their consternation hinders them from action. They stand looking on until we are near. Then they behold pale faces—strange armour—and horses oddly caparisoned. It is the white enemy!

They run from point to point—from

street to street! Those who carry water, dash down their ollas; and rush screaming to the houses. They climb to the roofs, drawing the ladders after them. Shouts are exchanged, and exclamations uttered in the voices of men, women, and children. Terror is on every face. Terror displays itself in every movement!

Meanwhile our line has approached, until we are within two hundred yards of the walls. There we halt for a moment. Twenty men are left as an outer guard. The rest of us, thrown into a body, ride forward, following our leader.

CHAPTER XVI.

ADELE.

We direct ourselves to the great building; and, surrounding it, halt. The old men are still upon the roof, standing along the parapet. They are frightened, and tremble like children.

"Do not fear us—we are friends!" cries Seguin, speaking in a strange language, and making signs to them.

His voice is not heard amidst the shrieks and shouting that still continue.

The words are repeated; and the sign given in a more emphatic manner.

The old men crowd along the edge of the parapet. There is one among them who differs from the rest. His snow-white hair reaches below his waist. There are bright ornaments hanging from his ears, and over his breast. He is attired in white robes. He appears to be a chief, for the rest obey him. He makes a signal with his hands, and the screaming subsides. He stands forward on the parapet, as if to speak to us.

"Amigos—amigos!" (friends!) cries he, speaking in Spanish!

"Yes—yes—we are friends," replies Seguin, in the same language. "Do not fear us! We come not to harm you."

"Why harm us? We are at peace with the white Pueblos to the east. We are the children of Moctezuma—we are Navajoes. What want you with us?"

"We come for our relatives—your white captives. They are our wives and daughters."

"White captives! You mistake us. We have no captives. Those you seek are among the nations of the Apaché, away far to the south."

"No; they are with you," replies Seguin. "I have certain information that they are here. Delay us not then! We have come a far journey for them; and will not go without them."

The old man turns to his companions. They converse in a low voice, and exchange signs. Again he faces round to Seguin.

"Believe me, señor chief," says he, speaking with emphasis, "you have been wrongly informed. We have no white captives."

"Pish! 'Ee dod-rotted ole liar!" cries Rube, pushing out of the crowd, and raising his catskin cap, as he speaks; "'Ee know this child, do 'ee?"

The skinless head is discovered to the gaze of the Indians. A murmur, indicative of alarm, is heard among them. The white

haired chief seems disconcerted. He knows the history of that scalp!

A murmur, too, runs through the ranks of the hunters. They had seen white faces as they rode up. The lie exasperates them; and the ominous click of rifles being cocked is heard on all sides.

"You have spoken falsely, old man," cries Seguin. We know you have white captives. Bring them forth then, if you would save your own lives!"

"Quick, d—n ye!" shouts Garey, raising his rifle in a threatening manner; "quick! or I'll dye the flax on yer old skull!"

"Patience, amigo! you shall see our white people—but they are not captives. They are our daughters—the children of Moctezuma."

The Indian descends to the third story of the temple. He enters a door, and presently returns, bringing with him five females dressed in the Navajo costume. They are

women and girls; and, as any one could tell at a glance, of the Spano-Mexican race!

But there are those present who know them still better. Three of them are recognised by as many hunters; and recognise them in turn. The girls rush out to the parapet, stretch forth their arms, and utter exclamations of joy. The hunters call to them.

"Pepé!" "Rafaela!" "Jesusita!" coupling their names with expressions of endearment. They shout to them to come down, pointing to the ladders.

"Bajan, niñas! bajan! aprisa! aprisa!" (come down, dear girls! quickly, quickly!)

The ladders rest upon the upper terraces. The girls cannot move them. Their late masters stand beside them, frowning and silent.

"Lay holt thar!" cries Garey, again threatening with his piece; "lay holt, d—n ye; and help the gals down, or I'll fetch some o'ye a tumblin over!"

"Lay holt! lay holt!" shout several others in a breath.

The Indians place the ladders. The girls descend; and the next moment leap into the arms of their friends.

Two of them remain above. Only three have come down. Seguin has dismounted, and passes these with a glance. None of them is the object of *his* solicitude!

He rushes up the ladder, followed by several of the men. He springs from terrace to terrace, up to the third. He presses forward to the spot—where stand the two girls. His looks are wild, and his manner that of one frantic. They shrink back at his approach, mistaking his intentions. They scream with terror!

He pierces them with his look. The instincts of the father are busy—they are baffled. One of the females is old—too old. The other is slave-like and coarse!

"Mon dieu! it cannot be!" he exclaims

with a sigh; "there was a mark, but no—no —no—it cannot be!"

He leans forward seizing the girl—though not unkindly—by the wrist. Her sleeve is torn open, and the arm laid bare to the shoulder.

"No, no!" he again exclaims, "it is not there. It is not she."

He turns from them. He rushes forward to the old Indian, who falls back frightened at the glare of his fiery eye!

"These are not all," cries he, in a voice of thunder; "there are others! Bring them forth, old man, or I will hurl you to the earth!"

"There are no other white squaws," replies the Indian, with a sullen and determined air.

"A lie—a lie! your life will answer—here! confront him, Rube!"

"'Ee dratted old skunk! that white har o' yourn aint a gwine to stay thur much

longer ev you dont bring her out. Whur is she? the young queen?

"*Al Sur*," and the Indian points to the south.

"*Oh! Mon dieu! mon dieu!*" cries Seguin, in his native tongue, and with an accentuation that expresses his complete wretchedness.

"Dont believe him, Cap.! I've seed a heap o' Injun in my time; and a lyiner old varmint than thisn I never seed yet. Ye heer'd him jest now 'bout the other gals?"

"Yes true—he lied directly—but she—she might have gone—"

"Not a bit o' it. Lyin's his trade. He's thur great medicine, and humbugs the hul kit o' them. The gal is what they call mystery queen. She knows a heap; and helps ole whitey hyur in his tricks, and sacrifiches. He dont want to loose her. She's hyur somewhur, I'll be boun'; but she are cachéd—that's sartin."

"Men!" cries Seguin, rushing forward to the parapet "take ladders! Search every house! Bring all forth, old and young. Bring them to the open plain. Leave not a corner unsearched. Bring me my child!"

The hunters rush for the ladders. They seize those of the great building; and soon possess themselves of others. They run from house to house, and drag out the screaming inmates.

There are Indian men in some of the houses. Lagging braves, boys, and "dandies." Some of these resist. They are slaughtered, scalped, and flung over the parapets!

Crowds arrive, guarded, in front of the temple—girls and women of all ages.

Seguin's eye is busy. His heart is yearning. At the arrival of each new group, he scans their faces. In vain. Many of them are young and pretty, but brown as the fallen leaf. *She* is not yet brought up.

I see the three captive Mexicans standing with their friends. They should know where she may be found.

"Question *them*," I whisper to the chief.

"Ha! you are right. I did not think of that. Come, come!"

We run together down the ladders; and approach the delivered captives. Seguin hurriedly describes the object of his search.

"It must be the Mystery Queen," says one.

"Yes! yes!" cries Seguin in trembling anxiety, "it is—she is the Mystery Queen."

"She is here then," adds another.

"Where? *where?*" *ejaculates the half* frantic father.

"Where? where?" *echo the girls* questioning one another.

"I saw her this morning—a short time ago—just before you came up."

"I saw *him* hurry her off," adds a second, pointing upward to the old Indian. "He has hidden her."

"Caval!" cries another, "perhaps in the *estufa?*"

"The estufa! what is it?"

"Where the sacred fire burns—where the old man makes his medicine."

"Where is it? lead me to it!"

"*Ay de mi!* we know not the way. It is a secret place, where they burn people! *ay de mi!*"

"But señor, it is in this temple—somewhere under the ground. *He* knows. None but he is permitted to enter it. *Carrai!* The estufa is a fearful place! So say the people."

An indefinite idea that his daughter may be in danger crosses the mind of Seguin. Perhaps, she is dead already, or dying by some horrid means. He is struck—so are we—with the expression of sullen malice

that displays itself upon the countenance of the medicine chief. It is altogether an Indian expression—that of dogged determination to die, rather than yield what he has made up his mind to keep. It is a look of demoniac cunning—characteristic of men of his peculiar calling among the tribes.

Haunted by this thought, Seguin runs to the ladder, and again springs upward to the roof, followed by several of the band. He rushes upon the lying priest, clutching him by the long hair.

"Lead me to her!" he cries, in a voice of thunder; "lead me to this queen—this mystery queen!—*she is my daughter.*"

"Your daughter! the Mystery Queen!" replies the Indian, trembling with fear for his life, yet still resisting the appeal. "No, white man; she is not. The queen is ours. She is the daughter of the Sun. She is the child of a Navajo chief."

"Tempt me no longer, old man! No longer I say. Look forth! If a hair of her head has been harmed, all these shall suffer. I will not leave a living thing in your town. Lead on! Bring me to the estufa!"

"To the estufa! to the estufa!" shout several voices.

Strong hands grasp the garments of the Indian, and are twined into his loose hair. Knives, already red and reeking, are brandished before his eyes. He is forced from the roof, and hurried down the ladders.

He ceases to resist—for he sees that resistance is death—and—half dragged, half leading—he conducts to the ground floor of the building.

He enters by a passage covered with the shaggy hides of the buffalo. Seguin follows, keeping his eye and hand upon him. We crowd after, close upon the heels of both.

We pass though dark ways—descending, as we go, through an intricate labyrinth. We

arrive in a large room dimly lighted. Ghastly images are before us, and around us—the mystic symbols of a horrid religion! The walls are hung with hideous shapes; and skins of wild beasts. We can see the fierce visages of the grizzly bear—the white buffalo—of the carcajou—of the panther—and the ravenous wolf. We can recognize the horns and frontlets of the elk, the cimmaron, and the grim bison. Here and there are idol figures, of grotesque and monster forms, carved from wood, and the red claystone of the Desert.

A lamp is flickering with a feeble glare; and on a *brazero*, near the centre of the room, burns a small bluish flame. It is the *sacred fire*—the fire that for centuries has blazed to the God Quetzalcoatl!

We do not stay to examine these objects. The fumes of the charcoal almost suffocate us. We run in every direction, overturning the idols, and dragging down the sacred skins.

There are huge serpents gliding over the floor, and hissing around our feet. They have been disturbed, and frightened at the unwonted intrusion. We too are frightened —for we hear the dreaded rattle of the *vivora!*

The men leap from the ground; and strike at them with the butts of their rifles. They crush many of them on the stone pavement.

There are shouts and confusion. We suffer from the exhalations of the charcoal. We will be stifled. Where is Seguin? Where has he gone?

Hark! There are screams! It is a female voice! There are voices of men too!

We rush towards the spot where they are heard. We dash aside the walls of pendant skins. We see the chief. He has a female in his arms,—a girl—a beautiful girl—robed in gold and bright plumes!

She is screaming as we enter, and struggling to escape him. He holds her firmly, and has torn open the fawn skin sleeve of her

tunic. He is gazing on her left arm, which is bared to the bosom!

"It is she—it is she!" he cries in a voice trembling with emotion; "O God! it is she! Adele! Adele! do you not know me? Me—your father?"

Her screams continue. She pushes him off, stretching out her arms to the Indian, and calling upon *him* to protect her!

The father entreats her in wild and pathetic words. She heeds him not. She turns her face from him, and crouches down—hugging the knees of the priest!

"She knows me not! O God! my child! my child!"

Again Seguin speaks in the Indian tongue, and with imploring accents:

"Adele! Adele! *I am your father!*"

"You! Who are you? The white men—our foes. Touch me not! away, white men! away!"

"Dear—dearest Adele! do not repel me—me, your father! You remember——"

"*My* father! My father was a great chief. He is dead. This is my father now. The sun is my father. I am a daughter of Moctezuma! I am a queen of the Navajoes!"

As she utters these words, a change seems to come over her spirit. She crouches no longer. She rises to her feet. Her screaming has ended, and she stands in an attitude of pride and indignation!

"O Adele!" continues Seguin, more earnest than ever, "look at me—look! Do you not remember? Look in my face! O Heaven! Here—see! Here is your mother, Adele! See! this is her picture —your angel mother. Look at it! Look, O Adele!"

Seguin, while he is speaking, draws a miniature from his bosom, and holds it before the eyes of the girl. It arrests her attention. She looks upon it, but without any signs of recognition. It is only to her a curious object.

She seems struck with his manner, frantic but entreating. She seems to regard him with wonder. Still she repels him. It is evident she knows him not. She has lost every recollection of him and his. She has forgotten the language of her childhood—she has forgotten her father, her mother—*she has forgotten all!*

* * * * *

I could not restrain my tears, as I looked upon the face of my friend—for I had grown to consider him such. Like one who has received a mortal wound, yet still lives, he stood in the centre of the group, silent and crushed. His head had fallen upon his breast. His cheek was blanched and bloodless—and his eye wandered with an expression of imbecility painful to behold. I could imagine the terrible conflict that was raging within!

He made no farther efforts to entreat the girl. He no longer offered to approach her;

but stood for some moments in the same attitude without speaking a word.

"Bring her away!" he muttered, at length, in a voice husky and broken; "bring her away! *Perhaps, in God's mercy, she may yet remember!*"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WHITE SCALP.

We repassed the horrid chamber, and emerged upon the lowermost terrace of the temple.

As I walked forward to the parapet, there was a scene below, that filled me with apprehension. A cloud seemed to come over my heart.

The impression was sudden; and, at the moment, indefinite as to its cause. Was it the sight—for I saw it—of blood? No. It could not be that. Blood had been before

my eyes too often of late; and I had become accustomed to its wanton shedding. It may have been partially the cause, but there were other sights and sounds, hardly affecting the eye and ear, yet sufficiently definite to impress my mind with fear and foreboding. There was a *bad electricity* in the air—not the natural, but the moral atmosphere—that reached me through those mysterious channels, not yet traced by philosophy. Look back upon your experience. Have you not often felt sensible that wrath or other bad passions existed in the minds of men, before you could perceive it by any *definite* look, word, or action?

As the wild animal foretells the hurricane when the atmosphere is tranquil, I felt instinctively that a dark scene was approaching.

Perhaps I drew my omens from the very tranquillity that reigned around. In the moral, as in the physical world, there is a stillness that precedes the storm.

In front of the temple were the women of the village—girls, women, and children—in all about two hundred. They were variously attired. Some were wrapped in their striped blankets. Some wore tilmas, and tunics of embroidered fawnskin, plumed and painted with dyes of vivid colour. Some were dressed in the garb of civilised life—in rich satins, that had been worn by the dames of the Del Norté; in flounces that had fluttered in the dance around the ankles of some gay maja!

Not a few in the crowd were entirely nude—without even the shielding of the figleaf.

They were all Indians, but of lighter and darker shades—differing in colour as in expression of face. Some were old, wrinkled, and coarse; but there were many of them young, noble-like, and altogether beautiful.

They were grouped together in various

attitudes. They had ceased their screaming, but murmured among themselves, in low and plaintive exclamations.

As I looked, I saw blood running from their ears! It had dappled their throats, and spurted over their garments.

A glance satisfied me as to the cause of this. They had been rudely robbed of their golden hangings!

Near and around them stood the scalp-hunters, in groups and afoot. They were talking in whispers and low mutterings. There were objects about their persons that attracted my eye. Curious articles of ornament or use peeped out from their pouches and haversacks. Bead-strings and pieces of shining metal—gold it was—hung around their necks, and over their breasts. It was the plundered bijouterie of the savage maidens.

There were other objects upon which my eye rested with feelings of a deeper pain.

Stuck behind the belts of many were scalps, fresh and reeking. Their knife-hilts and fingers were red. There was blood upon their hands—there was gloom in their glances.

The picture was appalling; and, adding to its awful impression, black clouds were, at the moment, rolling over the valley, and swathing the mountains in their opaque masses. The lightning jetted from peak to peak, followed by short claps of close and deafening thunder.

"Bring up the atajo!" shouted Seguin, as he descended the ladder with his daughter.

A signal was given; and shortly after, the mules, in charge of the arrieros, came stringing across the plain.

"Collect all the dry meat, that can be found. Let it be packed as speedily as possible."

In front of most of the houses there were strings of tasajo, hanging against the walls.

There were also dried fruits and vegetables, *chilé*, roots of the kamas, and skin bags filled with piñons and choke-berries.

The meat was soon brought together; and several of the men assisted the arrieros in packing it.

"There will be barely enough," said Seguin; "Here Rube," continued he, calling to the old trapper. "Pick out your prisoners. Twenty will be as many as we can take. You know them—choose those most likely to tempt an exchange."

So saying, the chief turned off toward the atajo, leading his daughter—with the intention of mounting her on one of the mules.

Rube proceeded to obey the orders given him. In a short time he had collected a number of unresisting captives; and had put them aside from the rest. They were principally girls and young lads, whose dress and features bespoke them of the *noblesse* of the nation—the children of chiefs and warriors.

This movement was not regarded in silence. The men had drawn together, and commenced talking in loud and mutinous language.

"Wagh!" exclaimed Kirker, a fellow of brutal aspect; "Thar are wives a-piece, boys—why not every man help himself? —why not?"

"Kirker's right," rejoined another; "I'm 'most froze for a squaw; an I've made up my mind to have one, or bust."

"But how are ye goin to feed 'em on the road? We ha'nt meat, if we take one a-piece."

"Meat be d—d!" ejaculated the second speaker; "we kin reach the Del Nort in four days or less. What do we want with so much meat?"

"There's meat a plenty," rejoined Kirker. "That's all the captain's palaver. If it runs out, we kin drop the weemen, and take what o' them's handiest to carry."

This was said with a significant gesture, and a ferocity of expression, revolting to behold.

"Now, boys! what say ye?"

"I freeze to Kirker."

"And I."

"And I."

"I'm not goin' to advise anybody," added the brute. "Ye may all do as ye d——d please about it; but this niggur's not a goin' to starve in the midst o' plenty."

"Right, comrade! right, I say."

"Wal. First spoke, first pick, I reckin. That's mountain law; so, old gal, I cottons to you. Come along, will yer?"

Saying this, he seized one of the Indians —a large, fine-looking woman, roughly by the wrist; and commenced dragging her toward the atajo.

The woman screamed and resisted—frightened—not at what had been said, for she did not understand it—but terrified by

the ruffian expression that was plainly legible in the countenance of the man.

"Shut up yer meat trap, will ye?" cried he, still pulling her toward the mules, "I'm not goin' to eat ye. I've had a grist o' wives in my time, and never ate one o' them yet. Wagh! Don't be so skeert. Come! mount hyar. Gee—yup!"

And, with this exclamation, he lifted the woman upon one of the mules.

"If ye don't sit still, I'll tie ye—mind that," and he held up the lasso, making signs of his determination.

A horrid scene now ensued.

A number of the scalp-hunters followed the example of their ruffian comrade. Each one chose the girl or woman he had fancied, and commenced hurrying her off to the atajo. The women shrieked. The men shouted and swore. Several scrambled for the same prize—a girl more beautiful than her companions. A quarrel

was the consequence. Oaths and ejaculations rang out. Knives were drawn, and pistols cocked!

"Toss up for her!" cried one.

"Aye that's fair—toss up—toss up!" shouted several.

The hint was adopted—the lots were cast—and the savage belle became the property of the winner.

In the space of a few minutes, nearly every mule in the atajo carried an Indian damsel.

Some of the hunters had taken no part in this Sabine proceeding. Some disapproved of it—for not all were bad—from motives of humanity. Others did not care for being "hampered with a squaw," but stood apart—savagely laughing at the scene.

During all this time, Seguin was on the other side of the building with his daughter. He had mounted her upon one of the mules; and covered her shoulders with his serapé.

He was making such preparations for her journey, as the tender solicitudes of the father suggested.

The noise at length attracted him; and leaving her in charge of his servants, he hurried round to the front.

"Comrades!" cried he, glancing at the mounted captives, and comprehending all that had occurred, "there are too many here. Are these whom you have chosen?" This question was directed to the trapper Rube.

"No," replied the latter, "them's 'em," and he pointed to the party he had picked out.

"Dismount these then, and place those you have selected upon the mules. We have a desert to cross, and it will be as much as we can do to pass it with that number."

And, without appearing to notice the scowling looks of his followers, he proceeded —in company with Rube and several others —to execute the command he had given.

The indignation of the hunters now showed itself in open mutiny. Fierce looks were exchanged, and threats uttered aloud.

"By G—d!" cried one, "I'll have my gal along, or her scalp."

"Vaya!" exclaimed another in Spanish. "Why take any of them? They're not worth the trouble, after all. There's not one of them worth the price of her own hair."

"Take the har then, and leave the niggurs!" suggested a third.

"I say so too."

"And I!"

"I vote with you, hoss."

"Comrades!" said Seguin, turning to the mutineers, and speaking in a tone of extreme mildness, "remember your promise. Count the prisoners, as we agreed. I will answer for the payment of all."

"Can ye pay for them now?" asked a voice.

"You know that that would be impossible."

"Pay for them now! pay for them now!" shouted several.

"Cash or scalps, say I!"

"*Carajo!* where is the captain to get the money, when we reach El Paso, more than here? He's neither a Jew, nor a banker; and its news to me if he's grown so rich. Where then is all this money to come from?"

"Not from the *Cabildo*, unless the scalps are forthcoming; I'll warrant that."

"True, José! They'll give no money to him, more than to us; and we can get it ourselves if we show the skins for it. That we can."

"Wagh! what cares he for us, now that he has got what he wanted?"

"Not a niggur's d—n. He wudn't let us go by the Prieto, when we kud a' gathered the shinin stuff in chunks."

"Now he wants us to throw away this chance too. We'd be d—d fools to do it, I say."

It struck me at this moment that I might interfere with success. Money seemed to be what the mutineers wanted—at least it was their alleged grievance; and rather than witness the fearful drama which appeared to be on the eve of enactment, I would have sacrificed my fortune.

"Men," cried I, speaking so that I could be heard above the din, "if you deem my word worth listening to, it is this. I have sent a cargo to Chihuahua with the last caravan. By the time we can get back to El Paso, the traders will have returned, and I will be placed in possession of funds double what you demand. If you will accept my promise, I will see that you be paid."

"Wagh! that talk's all very well, but what do we know of you or yer cargo?"

"Vaya! A bird in the hand's worth two in the bush."

"He's a trader. Who 's goin' to take his word?"

"D—n his cargo! Scalps or cash—cash or scalps! that's this niggur's advice; an if ye don't take it, boys, ye may leave it; but it's all the pay ye'll ever crook yer claws on."

The men had tasted blood; and, like the tiger, they thirsted for more. There were glaring eyes on all sides, and the countenances of some exhibited an animal ferociousness, hideous to look upon. The half-robber discipline, that hitherto ruled in the band, seemed to have completely departed; and the authority of the chief to be set at defiance.

On the other side stood the females, clinging and huddling together. They could not understand the mutinous language; but they saw threatening attitudes and

angry faces. They saw knives drawn, and heard the cocking of guns and pistols. They knew *there was danger;* and they crouched together whimpering with fear.

Up to this moment, Seguin had stood giving directions for the mounting of his captives. His manner was strangely abstracted—as it had been, ever since the scene of meeting with his daughter. That greater care, gnawing his heart, seemed to render him insensible to what was passing. He was not so.

As Kirker ended—for he was the last speaker—a change came over Seguin's manner, quick as a flash of lightning. Suddenly rousing himself from his attitude of indifference, he stepped forward in front of the mutineers.

"Dare!" shouted he, in a voice of thunder. "Dare to dishonour your oaths! By the eternal God! the first man who raises knife or rifle shall die on the instant!"

There was a pause, and a moment of deep silence.

"I had made a vow," continued he, "should it please God to restore me my child, this hand should be stained with no more blood. Let any man force me to break that vow, and by heaven, his blood shall be the first to stain it !"

A vengeful murmur ran through the crowd, but no one replied.

"You are but a cowardly brute, with all your bluster," he continued, turning round to Kirker; and looking him in the eye. "Up with that knife! Quick! or by the God of heaven, I will send this bullet through your ruffian heart!"

Seguin had drawn his pistol, and stood in an attitude that told he would execute the threat. His form seemed to have grown larger. His eye dilated, flashing as it rolled; and the man shrank before its glance! He saw death in it, if he disobeyed; and with a surly murmur, he fumbled mechanically at his belt, and thrust the blade back into its sheath !

But the mutiny was not yet quelled. These were men not so easily conquered. Fierce exclamations still continued; and the mutineers again began to encourage one another with shouts.

I had thrown myself alongside the chief, with my revolvers cocked and ready—resolved to stand by him to the death. Several others had done the same; among whom were Rube, Garey, Sanchez the bull-fighter, and the Maricopa.

The opposing parties were nearly equal, and a fearful conflict would have followed, had we fought; but at this moment, an object appeared that stifled the resentment of all. It was the common enemy!

Away on the western border of the valley we could see dark objects—hundreds of them—coming over the plain. They were still at a great distance, but the practised eyes of the hunters knew them at a glance. They were horsemen—they were Indians—they were our pursuers, the Navajoes!

They were riding at full gallop, and strung over the prairie like hounds upon a run. In a twinkling they would be on us!

"Yonder!" cried Seguin, "yonder are scalps enough to satisfy you; but let us see to our own. Come! to your horses! On with the atajo! I will keep my word with you at the Pass. Mount! my brave fellows, mount!"

The last speech was uttered in a tone of reconciliation; but it needed not that to quicken the movements of the hunters. They knew too well their own danger. They could have sustained the attack among the houses, but it would only have been until the return of the main tribe, when they knew that every life would be taken. To make a stand at the town would be madness, and was not thought of. In a moment we were in our saddles; and the atajo, strung out with the captives and provisions, was hurrying off toward the woods. We purposed

passing the defile that opened eastward; as our retreat by the other route was now cut off by the advancing horsemen.

Seguin had thrown himself at the head, leading the mule upon which his daughter was mounted. The rest followed—straggling over the plain, without rank or order.

I was among the last to leave the town. I had lingered behind purposely—fearing some outrage; and determined, if possible, to prevent it."

"At length," thought I, "they have all gone;" and putting spurs to my horse, I galloped after.

When I had ridden about a hundred yards from the walls, a loud yell rang behind me; and reining in my horse, I turned in the saddle and looked back. Another yell—wild and savage—directed me to the point whence the former had come.

On the highest roof of the temple two men were struggling. I knew them at a glance; and

I knew, too, it was a *death struggle*. One was the medicine chief, as I could tell by the flowing white hair. The scanty skirt, and leggings —the naked ankles—the close fitting skull-cap, enabled me, easily, to distinguish his antagonist. It was the earless trapper!

The conflict was a short one. I had not seen the beginning of it, but I soon witnessed the *denouément*. As I turned, the trapper had forced his adversary against the parapet; and with his long muscular arm was bending him over its edge. In the other hand—uplifted—he brandished his knife!

I saw a quick flash, as the blade was plunged—a red gush spurted over the garments of the Indian—his arms dropped—his body doubled over the wall—balanced a moment—and then fell with a dull sodden sound upon the terrace below!

The same wild whoop again rang in my ears; and the hunter disappeared from the roof.

I turned to ride on. I knew it was the

settling of some old account—the winding up of some terrible revenge!

The clattering of hoofs sounded behind me; and a horseman rode up alongside. I knew, without turning my head, that it was the trapper.

"Fair swop, they say, aint no stealin. Purty har too it are. Wagh! It wont neyther match nor patch mine; but it makes one's feelins easier."

Puzzled by this speech, I turned to ascertain its meaning. I was answered by the sight that met my eye. An object was hanging from the old man's belt, like a streak of snow-white flax. But it was not that. It was hair. It was a scalp!

There were drops of blood struggling down the silvery strands as they shook; and across them, near the middle, was a broad red band. It was the track of the trapper's knife, *where he had wiped it!*

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CANON FIGHT.

We entered the woods, and followed the Indian trail up stream. We hurried forward as fast as the atajo could be driven. A scramble of five miles brought us to the eastern end of the valley. Here the sierras impinged upon the river, forming a cañon. It was a grim gap, similar to that we had passed on entering from the west, but still more fearful in its features. Unlike the former, there was no road over the mountains on either side. The valley was headed in by precipitous cliffs, and the trail lay

through the cañon—up the bed of the stream. The latter was shallow. During freshets it became a torrent; and then the valley was inaccessible from the east, but that was a rare occurrence in these rainless regions.

We entered the cañon, without halting; and galloped over the detritus, and round huge boulders that lay in its bed. Far above us rose the frowning cliffs, thousands of feet overhead. Great rocks scarped out, abutting over the stream. Shaggy pines hung top downward, clinging in their seams. Shapeless bunches of cacti and mezcals crawled along the cliffs—their picturesque but gloomy foliage adding to the wildness of the scene.

It was dark within the pass—from the shadow of the jutting masses; but now darker than wont, for black storm-clouds were swathing the cliffs overhead. Through these, at short intervals, the lightning

forked and flashed, glancing in the water at our feet. The thunder, in quick, sharp percussions, broke over the ravine; but as yet it rained not.

We plunged hurriedly through the shallow stream, following the guide. There were places not without danger, where the water swept around angles of the cliff, with an impetuosity that almost lifted our horses from their feet; but we had no choice; and we scrambled on—urging our animals with voice and spur.

After riding for a distance of several hundred yards, we reached the head of the cañon, and climbed out on the bank.

"Now Cap'n," cried the guide, reining up, and pointing to the entrance, "hyur's yur place to make stand. We kin keep them back till thur sick i' the guts; that's what *we* kin do."

"You are sure there is no pass that leads out, but this one?"

"Ne'er a crack that a cat kud get out at; that are 'ceptin they go back by the other eend; an' that'll take them a round-about o' two days, I reckin."

"We will defend this then. Dismount men! Throw yourselves behind the rocks!"

"If 'ee take my advice, Cap, I'd let the mules and weemen keep for'ard, with a wheen o' the men to look arter 'em—them that's ridin' the meanest critters. It'll be nose an' tail when we do go; and if they starts now, yur see we kin easy catch up with 'em t'other side o' the perairer."

"You are right Rube. We cannot stay long here. Our provisions will give out. They must move ahead. Is that mountain near the line of our course think you?"

As Seguin spoke, he pointed to a snow-crowned peak, that towered over the plain, far off to the eastward.

"The trail we oughter take for the ole mine passes clost by it, Cap'n. To the south-

art o' yon snowy, there's a pass—it's the way I got clur myself."

"Very well—the party can take the mountain for their guide. I will despatch them at once."

About twenty men—who rode the poorest horses—were selected from the band. These, guarding the atajo and captives, immediately set out and rode in the direction of the snowy mountain. El Sol went with this party—in charge of Dacoma and the daughter of our chief. The rest of us prepared to defend the pass.

Our horses were tied in a defile; and we took our stands where we could command the embouchure of the cañon with our rifles.

We waited in silence for the approaching foe. As yet no war whoop had reached us; but we knew that our pursuers could not be far off; and we knelt behind the rocks, straining our eyes down the dark ravine.

It is difficult to give an idea of our position by the pen. The ground we had selected as the point of defence was unique in its formation, and not easily described. It is necessary you should know something of its peculiar character in order to comprehend what followed.

The stream, after meandering over a shallow, shingly channel, entered the cañon through a vast gate-like gap, between two giant portals. One of these was the abrupt ending of the granite ridge—the other a detached mass of stratified rock. Below this gate, the channel widened for a hundred yards or so—where its bed was covered with loose boulders and logs of drift timber. Still farther down the cliffs approached each other, so near that only two horsemen might ride between them abreast; and beyond this the channel again widened, and the bed of the stream was filled with rocks,—huge fragments that had fallen from the mountain.

The place we occupied was among the rocks and drift—*within the cañon*, and below the great gap which formed its mouth. We had chosen the position from necessity; as at this point the bank shelved out and offered a way to the open country, by which our pursuers could outflank us—should we allow them to get so far up. It was necessary, therefore, to prevent this; and we placed ourselves to defend the lower or second narrowing of the channel. We knew that below that point, beetling cliffs walled in the stream on both sides—so that it would be impossible for them to ascend out of its bed. If we could restrain them from making a rush at the shelving bank, we would have them penned up from any farther advance. They could only flank our position by returning to the valley, and going about by the western end—a distance of fifty miles at the least. At all events, we should hold them in check,

until the atajo had got a long start; and then, trusting to our horses, we intended to follow it in the night. We knew that in the end we must abandon the defence, as the want of provisions would not allow us to hold out for any length of time.

At the command of our leader we had thrown ourselves among the rocks. The thunder was now pealing over our heads, and reverberating through the cañon. Black clouds rolled along the cliffs—split and torn by brilliant jets. Big drops, still falling thinly, slapped down upon the stones.

As Seguin had told me, rain, thunder, and lightning are rare phenomena in these regions; but when they do occur, it is with that violence which characterizes the storms of the tropics. The elements, escaping from their wonted continence, rage in fiercer war. The long gathering electricity—suddenly displaced from its equilibrium—seems to revel in havoc, rending asunder the harmonies of nature.

The eye of the geognosist in scanning the surface of this plateau land, could not be mistaken in the character of its atmosphere. The dread cañons, the deep *barrancas*, the broken banks of streams, and the clay-cut channels of the arroyos, all testified, that we were in a land of sudden floods.

Away to the east—towards the head waters of the river—we could see that the storm was raging in its full fury. The mountains in that direction were no longer visible. Thick rain clouds were descending upon them; and we could hear the "sough" of the falling water. We knew that it would soon be upon us!

"What's keepin them anyhow?" inquired a voice.

Our pursuers had time to have been up. The delay was unexpected.

"The Lord only knows," answered another. "I spose thar puttin on a fresh coat o'paint at the town."

"They'll get their paint washed off, I

reckin. Look to yer primin hosses!—that's my advice."

"By Gosh! it's a goin to come down in spouts."

"That's the game, boyees!—hooray for that!" cried old Rube.

"Why? Do ye want to git soaked, old case?"

"That's adzactly what this child wants."

"Well—it's more 'n I do. I'd like to know what ye want to git wet for. Do ye wish to put your old carcase into an agey?"

"If it rains two hours, do 'ee see?" continued Rube, without paying attention to the last interrogatory; "we needn't stay hyur, do 'ee see?"

"Why not, Rube?" inquired Seguin, with interest.

"Why Cap," replied the guide; "I've seed a skift o' a shower make this hyur crik that 'ee wud'nt care to wade it. Hooray! it are a comin, sure enuf! Hooray!"

As the trapper uttered these exclamations, a vast black cloud came rolling down from the east, until its giant wings canopied the defile. It was filled with rumbling thunder, breaking at intervals into louder percussions, as the red bolts passed hissing through it. From this cloud the rain fell, not in drops, but—as the hunter had predicted—in "spouts."

The men—hastily throwing the skirts of their hunting shirts over their gun-locks—remained silent, under the pelting of the storm.

Another sound, heard between the peals, now called our attention. It resembled the continuous noise of a train of wagons passing along a gravelly road. It was the sound of hoof-strokes on the shingly bed of the cañon. It was the horse-tread of the approaching Navajoes!

Suddenly it ceased. They had halted. For what purpose? Perhaps to reconnoitre.

This conjecture proved to be correct; for in a few moments a small red object appeared over a distant rock. It was the forehead of an Indian, with its vermilion paint. It was too distant for the carry of a rifle; and the hunters watched it without moving.

Soon another appeared, and another, and then a number of dark forms were seen lurking from rock to rock, as they advanced up the cañon. Our pursuers had dismounted; and were approaching us on foot!

Our faces were concealed by the "wreck" that covered the stones; and the Indians had not yet discovered us. They were evidently in doubt as to whether we had gone on; and this was their van-guard making the necessary reconnoissance.

In a short time the foremost, by starts and runs, had got close up to the narrow part of the cañon. There was a boulder below this

point, and the upper part of the Indian's head showed itself for an instant over the rock. At the same instant half a dozen rifles cracked; the head disappeared; but the moment after, an object was seen down upon the pebbles, at the base of the boulder. It was the brown arm of the savage, lying palm upward! We knew that the leaden messengers had done their work.

The pursuers—though at the expense of one of their number—had now ascertained the fact of our presence, as well as our position; and the advance party were seen retreating as they had approached.

The men, who had fired, reloaded their pieces; and kneeling down as before, watched with sharp eyes and cocked rifles.

It was a long time before we heard anything more of the enemy; but we knew that they were deliberating on some plan of attack.

There was but one way by which they

could defeat us—by charging up the cañon, and fighting us hand to hand. By an attack of this kind their main loss would be in the first volley. They might ride upon us before we could reload; and—far outnumbering us—would soon decide the day with their long lances. We knew all this; but we knew too, that a first volley, when well delivered, invariably staggers an Indian charge; and we relied on such a hope for our safety.

We had arranged to fire by platoons, and thus have the advantage of a second discharge, should the Indians not retreat at the first.

For nearly an hour the hunters crouched under the drenching rain, looking only to keep dry the locks of their pieces. The water, in muddy rivulets, began to trickle through the shingle; and eddying around the rocks covered the wide channel in which we now stood, ankle deep.

Both above and below us, the stream—gathered up by the narrowing of the channel—was running with considerable velocity.

The sun had set—at least it seemed so in the dismal ravine where we were. We were growing impatient for the appearance of our enemy.

"Perhaps they have gone round," suggested one.

"No; thar a waitin' till night. They'll try it then."

"Let 'em wait then," muttered Rube, "ef thur green enuf. A half an hour more 'll do; or this child don't understan' weather sign."

"Hist! hist!" cried several voices together. "See! they are coming!"

All eyes were bent down the pass. A crowd of dark objects appeared in the distance, filling up the bed of the stream. They were the Indians, and on horseback! We knew from this that they were about

to make a charge. Their movements too confirmed it. They had formed two-deep, and held their bows ready to deliver a flight of arrows as they galloped up!

"Look out boyees!" cried Rube, "thur a comin' now in airnest. Look to yur sights, and give 'em gos, do 'ee hear?"

As the trapper spoke, two hundred voices broke out into a simultaneous yell. It was the war-cry of the Navajoes!

As its vengeful notes rang up the cañon, they were answered by loud cheers from the hunters, mingled with the wild whoops of their Delaware and Shawano allies.

The Indians halted for a moment beyond the narrowing of the cañon, until those who were rearmost should close up. Then, uttering another cry, they dashed forward into the gap!

So sudden was their charge, that several of them had got fairly through before a shot was fired. Then came the reports of

the guns—the "crack—crack—crack" of rifles—the louder detonations of the Spanish pieces, mingled with the whizzing sound of Indian arrows. Shouts of encouragement and defiance were given on both sides; and groans were heard, as the grooved bullet or the poisoned barb tore up the yielding flesh.

Several of the Indians had fallen at the first volley. A number had ridden forward to the spot of our ambush, and fired their arrows in our faces. But our rifles had not all been emptied; and these daring savages were seen to drop from their saddles at the srtaggling and successive reports.

The main body wheeled behind the rocks, and were now forming for a second charge. This was the moment of danger. Our guns were idle, and we could not prevent them from passing the gap, and getting through to the open country.

I saw Seguin draw his pistol, and rush for-

ward, calling upon those who were similarly armed to follow his example. We ran after our leader down to the very jaws of the cañon, and stood waiting the charge.

It was soon to come—for the enemy, exasperated by many circumstances, were determined on our destruction, cost what it might. Again we heard their fierce war cry; and amidst its wild echoes the savages came galloping into the gap.

"Now's yur time," cried a voice, "fire! Hooray!"

The cracks of fifty pistols were almost simultaneous. The foremost horses reared up, and fell back, kicking and sprawling in the gap. They fell, as it were, in a body—completely choking up the channel. Those who came on behind, urged their animals forward. Some stumbled on the heap of fallen bodies. Their horses rose and fell again, trampling their dead and living riders among their feet. Some struggled over

and fought us with their lances. We struck back with our clubbed guns, and closed upon them with our knives and tomahawks.

The stream rose and foamed against the rocks, pent back by the prostrate animals. We stood thigh-deep in the gathering flood. The thunder roared over head, and the lightning flashed in our faces, as though the elements took part in the conflict!

The yelling continued wild and vengeful as ever. The hunters answered it with fierce shouts. Oaths flew from foaming lips; and men grappled in the embrace that ended only in death!

And now the water—gathered into a deep dam—lifted the bodies of the animals that had hitherto obstructed it, and swept them out of the gap. The whole force of the enemy would be upon us. O God, they are crowding up, and our guns are empty!

At this moment a new sound echoed in our ears. It was not the shouts of men,

nor the detonation of guns, nor the pealing of the thunder. It was the *hoarse roaring of the torrent!*

A warning cry was heard behind us. A voice called out "Run for your lives! To the bank! to the bank!"

I turned and beheld my companions rushing for the slope, uttering words of terror and caution. At the same instant my eye became fixed upon an approaching object. Not twenty yards above where I stood, and just entering the cañon, came a brown and foaming mass. It was water—bearing on its crested front huge logs of drift, and the torn branches of trees. It seemed as though the sluice of some great dam had been suddenly carried away, and this was the first gush of the escaping flood!

As I looked, it struck the portals of the cañon with a percussion like thunder; and then, rearing back, piled up to a height of twenty feet. The next moment it came surging through the gap!

I heard their terrified cry as the Indians wheeled their horses and fled. I ran for the bank, following my companions. I was impeded by the water that already reached to my thighs; but with desperate energy I plunged and sweltered through it, till I had gained a point of safety.

I had hardly climbed out, when the torrent rolled past with a hissing, seething sound. I stood to observe it. From where I was, I could see down the ravine for a long reach. The Indians were already in full gallop, and I saw the tails of their hindmost horses just disappearing around the rocks!

The bodies of dead and wounded were still lying in the channel. There were hunters as well as Indians. The wounded screamed, as they saw the coming flood. Those who had been our comrades called to us for help. We could do nothing to save them. Their cries had hardly reached us, when they were lifted, upon the crest of the

current, like so many feathers, and carried off with the velocity of projectiles!

"Thar's three good fellows gone under! Wagh!"

"Who are they?" asked Seguin, and the men turned round with inquiring looks.

"Thar's one Delaware, and Big Jim Harris, and ——."

"Who is the third man that's missing? Can any one tell?"

"I think, captain, its Kirker,"

"It *is* Kirker, by the eternal! I seed him down. Wagh! They'll lift *his* har to a sartinty."

"Aye, they'll fish him out below. That's a sure case."

"They'll fish out a good haul o' thur own, I reckin'. It'll be a tight race, anyhow. I've heern o' a horse runnin' agin a thunder shower; but them niggurs 'll make good time, if thur tails aint wet afore they git to 'tother eend—*they* will."

As the trapper spoke, the floating and still struggling bodies of his comrades were carried to a bend in the cañon, and whirled out of sight. The channel was now filled with the foaming yellow flood, that frothed against the rocks as it forged onward.

Our danger was over for the time. The cañon had become impassable; and, after gazing for a while upon the torrent—most of us with feelings of awe—we turned away, and walked toward the spot where we had left our horses.

END OF VOL. II.

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